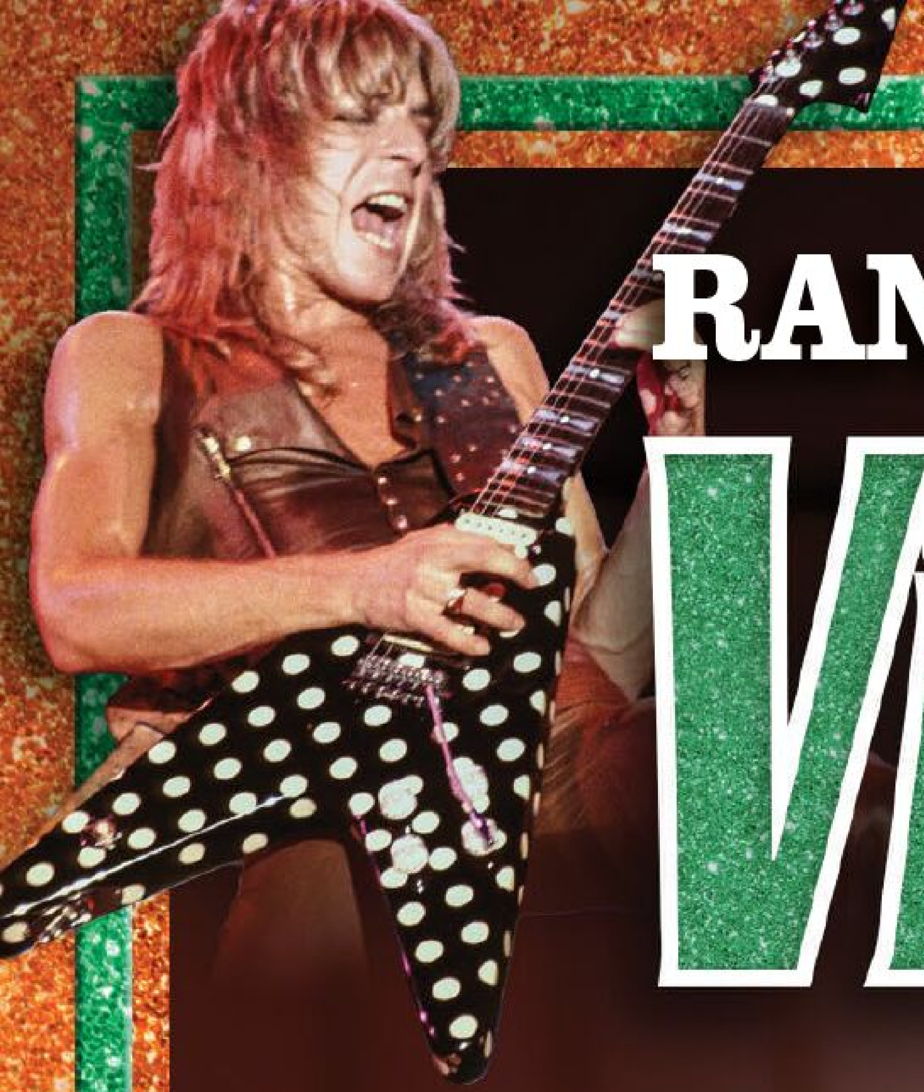
RANDY RHOADS



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Vintage Guitar Magazine

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The Park Model 1229
Late-run Park amps were often testing grounds for mods and variations on Marshall circuits – hotter preamp stages, different output-stage configurations, or, as with this 100-watt, a tone stage unlike anything in Marshalls of the day. | ***By Dave Hunter***

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Austin nightclub impresario Clifford Antone was also a musician and collector who gathered early Teles and Strats, custom-color Fenders, Gibsons from the '50s, and his favorite – a '52 Precision he used to jam with an array of blues legends. | ***By Ward Meeker***

60 **BRIAN SETZER**
What a Dude Does
The iconic rocker's new album highlights his rockabilly fire with a smokin' set of tunes containing a few surprises. Considerate and contemplative, he spoke with *VG* about the set, occasionally launching into riffs and crooning lines. | ***By Bret Adams***

66 **JERRY KENNEDY**
A-Team Guitarist, A-List Producer
At just 13, he was playing sessions at RCA Victor before becoming part of Nashville's A-Team of elite first-call musicians. Later, as a lead producer, he guided some of the most-enduring recordings by everyone from Roger Miller to Charlie Rich, Jerry Lee Lewis to Reba McEntire. | ***By Rich Kienzle***

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READER MAIL

Elliot Easton's Fender Custom shop 0007 today (left), and on the bench with John Page and Michael Stevens in 1987.

BEAUTIFUL BERNIE AND HIS 'BURST

Thank you for the memorial to Bernie Marsden (November '23). I first met Bernie in 1972 and we often picked up the phone and had very long chats about bands and guitars.

One day, he mentioned being offered a 1959 Les Paul and said he'd give me a ring when he'd bought it. True to his word, some time later he phoned and asked if I would like to visit his London flat to see it. About an hour later, it was in my hands. It was *beautiful*, still with a lot of red in the sunburst. It was just a great guitar, and I hope it gets into the hands of the right person.

Bernie was one of those special musicians, a great guitarist and a super songwriter. I will always thank God I met him.

Art Attwood
Farnham, Surrey, U.K.

FREDDIE FLASHBACK

The October issue was the best in a while. Among the many interesting things was the piece on Freddie King's ES-355.

I'm pretty sure I played that guitar when I was in a band from Mississippi that moved to Austin in January, 1976. We became fans of and friends with a great band called Tommy Hill and Texas Crude, whose guitarist, Al Bettis, invited us to jam one afternoon at the Rome Inn. Al had a Walnut-finish 355 and said Freddie King had traded it for a new Les Paul Deluxe, and the wear down the treble side of the neck was from Freddie's rings. I vividly remember playing it and thinking it was *so* cool. Rock on.

Webb Wilder
Nashville, Tennessee

THANK YOU, ROBIN!

It was great to see the October "Pop 'N Hiss" feature on Robin Trower's *Twice Removed From Yesterday*. As a teenager, I remember hearing "Bridge of Sighs" through the ceiling speakers as I was riding the escalator in a shopping mall; I bought the record immediately.

Other Trower-album purchases followed. His genius is underappreciated, but certainly worth the effort for those unfamiliar. Listen especially to the first four albums and enjoy one of the finest players to ever strap on a Strat. Thank you, Mr. Trower.

Stu Stull
Columbus, Ohio

FAVOR TABOR

I have been an avid reader and subscriber for years and the October "Fretprints" on Ty Tabor was the best thing I've seen since the Robin Trower "Fretprints." Tabor seems to fly under the radar while the usual suspects are covered every month (by lesser publications).

I have played bass for 50 years and guitar for 20, and as a lifelong rhythm-section man, I appreciate his feel, grounded in timing and the pocket like true greats including EVH and SRV. His solo efforts shine, as well.

I spent most of my musical career as a lead-singing bassist in a trio, and am blown away when I watch live videos of songs like "Dogman" and "It's Love," with crushing grooves, monster tone, and perfect three-part harmonies. Thanks again for the tip of the hat to a mostly overlooked player.

Larry Hayes
McMinnville, Oregon

A big thank you for including Ty Tabor in the October issue. The first time I heard "Over My Head," I was hooked on his tone, phrasing, and overall ability, which led to my buying the *Gretchen* album, which in turn opened my mind to his incredible talent.

My first experience seeing King's X live was in the mid '90s, when they opened for AC/DC. It confirmed that KX was the same band I'd seen in the early '80s, when it was known as The Edge and played at Harry's Rock 'n Roll Club, across the Arkansas River from my hometown of Ft. Smith.

Earlier this year, KX came to Dallas and crushed it. Ty's tone and phrasing put the crowd in a trance. He's one of the most-underrated guitarists today

John McSwain
McKinney, Texas

CRENSHAW CLASSIC

Marshall Crenshaw's "Someday, Someway" was our late-boomer coming-of-age song, and his *Field Day* album ("Pop 'N Hiss," September '23) remains a classic. Thank you for an in-depth download of his career and the magic that made the music, including the amazing instruments.

A.D. Collins
Saratoga Springs, New York

OG CS

In your feature on the original Fender Custom Shop ("Good Times In Bad: The Origin of Fender's Original Vintage Series," March '23), the photo of John Page and Mike Stevens shows my lefty Seafoam Green Tele Thinline on the bench! I was the first artist to order from them and have serial number 0007 and 0008 – the first six were ordered by a store in Texas, I believe. Here's 0007.

Elliot Easton

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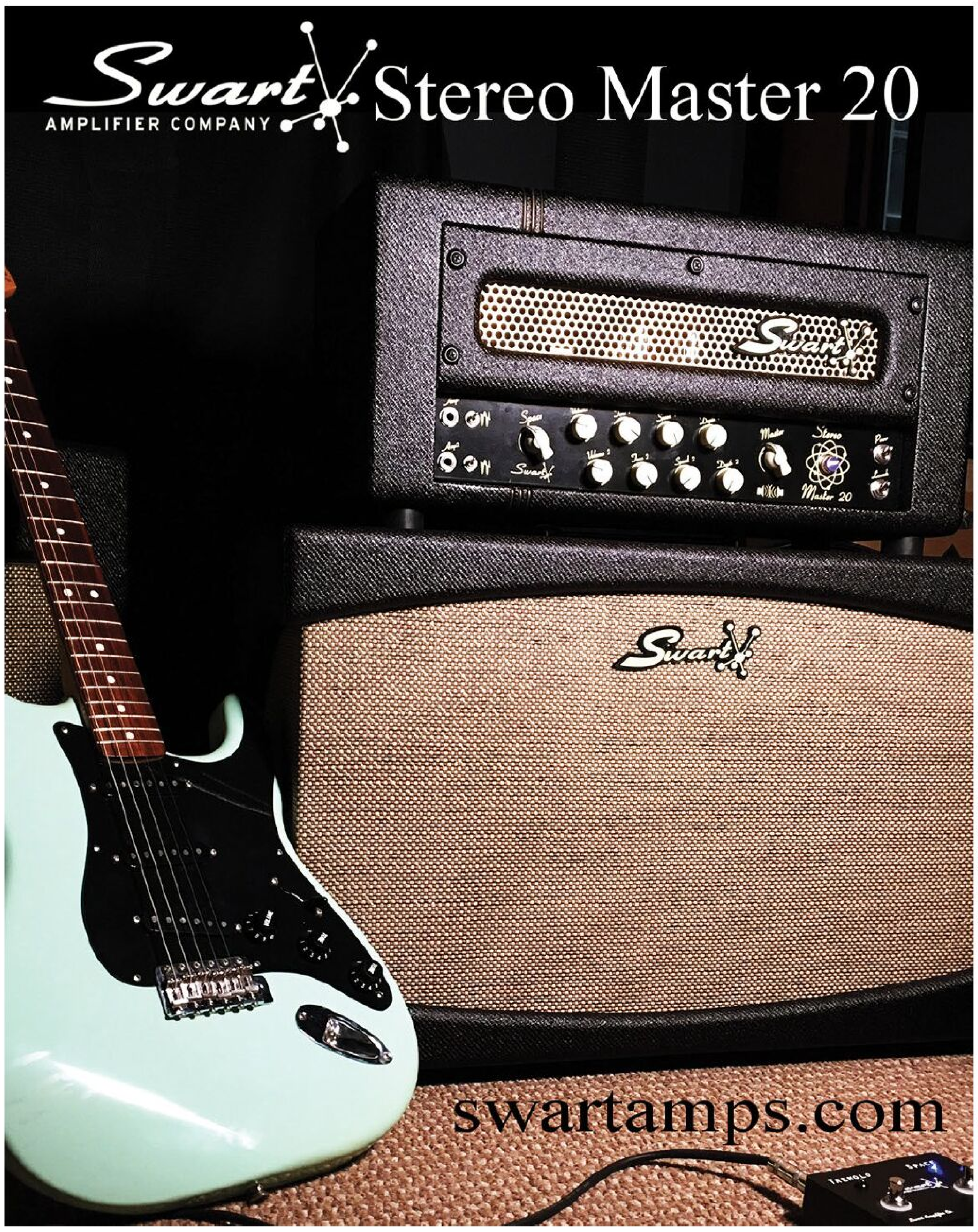

FIRST FRET

A setlist and notes on Pete Yarrow's '73 Gallagher dreadnought.

MIM HOSTS "ACOUSTIC AMERICA" EXHIBIT

The Musical Instrument Museum, Phoenix, recently opened the special exhibit "Acoustic America: Iconic Guitars, Mandolins, and Banjos," which includes 90 acoustic stringed instruments that have been played by heroes of folk, blues, and bluegrass. Instruments include Earl Scruggs' 1928 Gibson RB-Granada, a 1935 Martin D-28 played by Elizabeth Cotten, Lloyd Loar's personal 1924 F-5, Mississippi John Hurt's '64 Guild F-30, four Loar-signed instruments from David Grisman's collection, including a '25 F-5 "Fern," and a 12-fret Gallagher dreadnought played by Pete Yarrow when Peter, Paul and Mary joined Bob Dylan and Stevie Wonder to sing "Blowin' in the Wind" at the inaugural celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day as a national holiday in 1986. The exhibit runs through September 15, 2024.

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Stan Werbin and his shop, Elderly Instruments, Lansing, Michigan, have been recognized as America's Top Small Business for 2023 by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Each year, the USCC recognizes seven finalists from more than 15,000 applicants. The group cited Elderly's, "...ability to embrace change, adapt to new challenges, and constantly innovate while remaining true to the company's 50-year legacy and heritage." The award included a $25,000 prize and recognition at an October 19 gala in Washington, D.C.

CEO Lillian Werbin accepted on behalf of the store, which was established in 1972, employs more than 40 people, and has been cited for its role in the revitalization of Old Town Lansing.

Carl Verheyen: Erick Anderson.

CARL VERHEYEN

Riverboat Music

On his new album, *Riverboat Sky*, Carl Verheyen combines passionate musicality, spellbinding virtuosity, and ebullient rock and roll. It's also a tone fest, as Verheyen morphs chicken-fried banjo rolls with the blues.

For Verheyen, though, it's always about the song – songs with the coolest gear performed in high-end studios, that is.

Your guitar playing is stellar, but your vocals are perfect on *Riverboat Sky*.

I've been taking voice lessons, which has been a funny thing to finally do at my age. I produced a record by a singer/songwriter who was writing a play. He could be Prince, Stevie Wonder, or a gospel singer. I said, "Do you teach?" He said, "That's what I do for a living." So, I've been studying with him, and he has opened some doors for me, especially when it comes to warm-ups, because I never used to warm up. I hated doing it.

You took your album on the road before you recorded it.

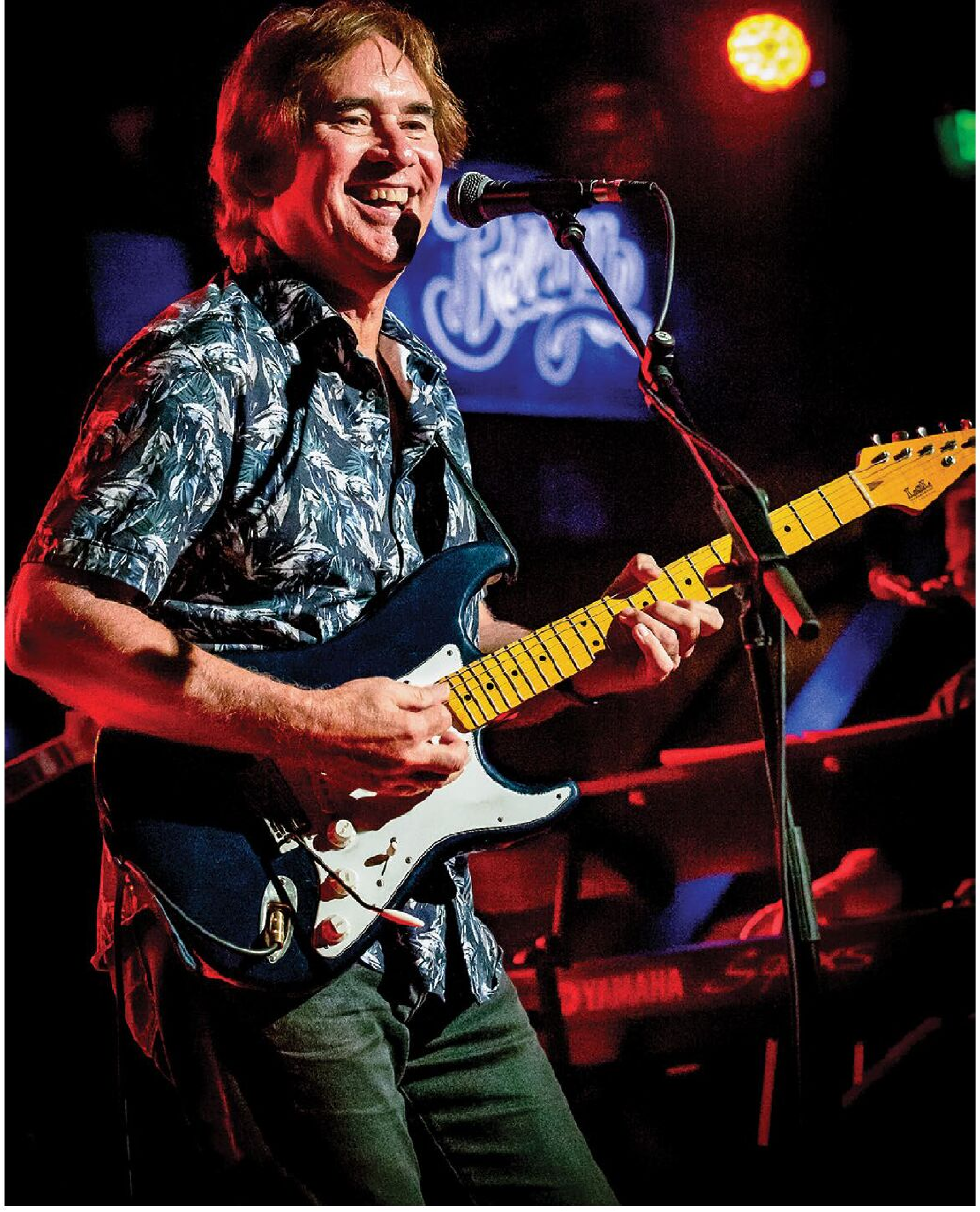
I have the kind of fans that don't mind if you spring stuff on them they've never heard. I did a tour in 2021 with Chad Wackerman on drums and Alphonso Johnson on bass, and we tried new stuff. Then I took my regular touring band on the road, and I knew who I wanted to play on it, which arrangement worked best, and it was a great way to do it. We were tight on everything by the time we got in the studio. There were only a few new tunes to spring on them.

So, you tried different arrangements on tour.

Yeah. I cut parts out and added a bridge to the song "Dragonfly." I wrote a halftime section and a bridge after we were halfway through the tour.

You're a big fan of old-school recording studios like Sunset Sound Recorders.

Everybody has a home studio. So many of my friends do overdubs at home. But there's nothing like going into a big studio



and being able to distance-mic your amp as well as close-mic it. I like to put 10 heads in the control room, choose a cabinet, and have an engineer who walks around and listens to where the sound is blooming. Some engineers will get up on a stool or a ladder and say, "Hey, it sounds amazing up here!" Then mic up there. That's the kind of engineer I like to work with – the creative type. We spend all our time getting the tone and very little time figuring out how to get it recorded. That's their job.

Which amps did you use on the album?

I'm a big Marshall fan, so I used three of those. I have a 1966 JTM45, and I used a '68 JMP50, both plexis. I also have a '69 100-watt, which is what Van Halen used. I'm also a big Fender fan, especially for the cleans. My current live rig is a Showman head and a 100-watt Hiwatt head running clean, in stereo.

Every year, I play an event called The Guitar Masters Series, in Bakersfield. The promoter one day told me that a fan wanted to give me a Dumble. I said, "What?" John Mayer just paid 150 grand for one of those. I think it's a little out of my wheelhouse." But the guy wanted me to have it; he was about 80 years old and had been friends with Alexander Dumble. It was a later-era model, and he said, "I don't need the money, but you need the amp." He was adamant.

I used that Dumble on a lot of the record, but it took me a while to figure out how to use it. I've always found sound by dialing my amp into semi-crunch mode then using a pedal to saturate and and allow it to soar. With the Dumble, you don't use a pedal. I used a humbucker and it took a while to learn all that because I was using it live as a part of my rig. Once I figured it out, I began to dig it.

Other than your '66 SG, what did you play?

I used my LSL signature models. I have one maple-neck and two rosewood-neck models. I used the SG for solos. On "Queen Bee," I used a '66 ES-335. I recorded a rhythm track with the SG and it sounded too aggressive. So, I went back in with a Framus Mayfield, which is like an Epiphone Casino or a ES-330 with P-90s. It was the perfect sound for that song. ***– Oscar Jordan***

Carl Verheyen: Jon Naugle.

SHERYL BAILEY

New Ground in The SBQ

Sheryl Bailey has enjoyed a steady upward trajectory since her career launched 20 years ago. One of the leading proponents of modern jazz guitar, she was dubbed "one of the new greats" by *Downbeat*, boasting a string of albums, recording sessions with Alan Broadbent, Art Farmer, Urbie Green, Eric Kloss, Steve Kuhn, Roseanna Vitro, and others, numerous appearances worldwide, and a recent professorship/assistant chair position at Berklee. With *Homage*, she's breaking new ground with her quartet, The SBQ, and moving jazz guitar into the world of multimedia.

You're documenting, with specificity, every track on *Homage*. That's unprecedented.

That's part of the Youtube release. In my performances and teaching, I talk about my tunes; it's part of building a career with original compositions and instrumental music. For my audience, as well as the casual listener, it puts the stories into their imagination, provides behind-the-scenes glimpses, and personal and technical insight. My intent was to create something like an event beyond recording music for an album, like combining digital downloads, vinyl records, and video clips for each piece.

What's the basic premise?

Honoring influences. Every song is a dedication to someone important. "Open Sesame" is for Joe Henderson; I never met him, but his music gave me inspiration and direction. Though it has modern harmony and rhythmic complexity, it's accessible. For me, it's about the melody – that's at the center. That's also evident on "The Search for New Light," dedicated to Chick Corea. "Velvet Hammer," inspired by Pat Martino, was on *Reunion of Souls* (2001), and it conveys his powerful life force, eighth-note drive, and identity. That's hard to get on the guitar. But beyond his playing, people need to check Pat out as composer. *Starbright* and *Joyous Lake* are desert-island records for me.

What about "144"?

"144" honors the band – Miki Hayama (keyboards), Harvie S (bass/assistant producer) and Neal Smith (drums). I'd played with them on other projects, but it's exciting to see players with whom you've had relationships connect with each other; it's another layer of satisfaction. Harvie S and I had been partners on two Plucky Strum albums.

"A Fine Vine" honors Mike Stern and a different side of modern harmony.

One of Harvie S's records, *In a Different Light*, had Mike on it. That was before I met Harvie. I listened to that one repeatedly; it was very influential when I was studying at Berklee. Every guitar player should have it! FYI, Gene Bertoncini was on fire on "Embraceable You" – it's the best rendition ever. When I was at Berklee, I had cassette bootlegs of Mike playing standards at The Willow jazz club, and that's what I transcribed to learn to play the music. I never studied with Mike directly, but via Bruce Arnold, I got into all the Charlie Banacos stuff, all the chromatic-approach material. That was a big part of his style.

How did the album originate? Was it organic or a set of pre-existing pieces?

I'd gotten a grant from Berklee, had a career change, moved to a new city (Boston) and was coming out of the pandemic. It was a reflective time, I asked myself: How did I get here? I wanted to give thanks to those that enriched my life from afar so I cultivated material that had those connections. Other than "Velvet Hammer" all the pieces hadn't been recorded previously. The only brand-new post-pandemic composition was "Exit," for George Garzone; the others were sitting in my book waiting for a recording opportunity.

Your video rundowns have something for guitar players as well as fans. You get into the how and the what.

There are many things magical about music, but understanding harmony, melody, and the instrument is not magical in itself, it's very pragmatic and scientific. The magic is in getting people to play together and develop something. I talk a lot about how the songs came alive in the process of Homage as well as the technicalities. I hope it comes off like, "These are people playing together – they're not trying to prove anything, they're just doing it."

Which instruments and what gear did you use on *Homage*?

I played my second McCurdy Mercury guitar, the newer one that Jimmy Wyble gifted me. It's built by Ric McCurdy in New York City. He's such a talented luthier and it's an amazing guitar. It's based on the McCurdy Messenger of the Gods model introduced in 2004 – a scaled-down ES-335 with two pickups, ebony bridge and tailpiece. I also have a couple of McCurdy solidbody models in Tele and Strat configurations, and my original Mercury.

I plugged into a Deluxe Reverb, which is a favorite studio amp, and used Valeton Coral pedals for some effects – a chorus on "A Fine Vine" and T-wah on "Exit." – ***Wolf Marshall***

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ROMAN BULAKHOV

Ukrainian Trailblazer

If there's a 21st-century guitar style, Roman Bulakhov is a prime example, particularly how he fuses rock, funk, jazz, hip-hop – and everything else – into a radical stew. The music tumbles like an acrobat, with fast rhythmic and chordal changes, yet simmers with soulful grooves. With the Ukrainian war raging, Bulakhov is living in Tbilisi, Georgia, but he's still determined to express his music on the trailblazing release, *Surfing*.

In "Lonely Sad Tbilisi Dog," we can hear how your jazz-soul guitar melds with hip-hop.

I now live in Tbilisi, where there are a lot of street dogs. Looking at them, this melody came to my mind; then I made a beat and recorded a guitar melody over it. I sent a demo to my friends for their parts – fantastic musicians Elijah Fox and Silvan Strauss – and there's no editing. It's just a pure, raw art of playing.

Do you have a jazz background?

I took three classes of piano in music school when I was 10, but then guitar swallowed me. I started to study at a music college in my hometown of Severodonetsk, Ukraine. My first year was as a choir conductor, then second on acoustic guitar, and finally graduated from the Kharkiv Music College as a jazz guitarist. My parents are musicians as well, and inspired me at first; back then, they played in a cover band with a very talented guitarist, Roman Ptushka, who inspired me to become a musician.

Your guitar style is so unusual. How did you develop that complex way of chopping up rhythms and layering licks, like "Kyiv Time"?

I've always loved drummers and their rhythmic shifts have always piqued my interest. I tried to repeat some of these elements on guitar and make them into riffs or licks. This allows me to amplify the melodies with an interesting rhythm, as if adding a new angle to the sound.

Who were your guitar influences?

I love listening to the master, Pat Metheny; my favorite recordings of his are *Bright Size Life* from 1976 and *Unity Band* from 2012. Greg Howe was a big influence on me in the beginning; thanks to him, I got acquainted with the style of jazz-rock and fusion. And of course, Guthrie Govan, the guitarist who changed the game. Absolutely fantastic musician.

"Big Cool and Angry" blends heavy rock and soul attitudes. Who plays that thick fuzz-bass riff?

Yeah, that track is an absolute mess of mood changes. When I wrote it, I wanted to show all my extreme states, to make it like a tsunami of emotions. I recorded bass by myself and put a huge, fuzz, pulsing synth note to make a powerful low-end, which creates a sound explosion I love so much.

Which D'Angelico guitars do you use?

I have a lot of them, but my favorite is an Excel DC, which was the first D'Angelico I got and has the best semi-hollow tone I've ever heard. I did more than 200 gigs with that guitar, and will play 200 more with pleasure!

What about amps – or is everything inside your computer?

I mainly recorded the sound of Neural DSP Quad Cortex. Sometimes I used a Supro Delta King, set clean with two mics – a Shure SM57 and AKG C414. For guitar fuzz, I used a Pigtronix Star Eater.

Tell us about "Ukrainian Song." That has expert acoustic work.

"Ukrainian Song" was a working title; the real name is "Your Day," which in Ukrainian is "Твій день." I decided to arrange it for acoustic guitar and string quartet, which gives the track even more sensuality and thoughtfulness, immersing the listener in the mood. It features my brother, Zhenya Milkovskyi, from our rock band, Nervy, who sings in Ukrainian, while Gigi Dedalamazishvili, from the band Mgzavrebi, sings in Georgian. It's a two-language song and there are many meanings in the lyrics, but the main motif is "Everything I've lost – let someone else find it." I'm very proud of it.

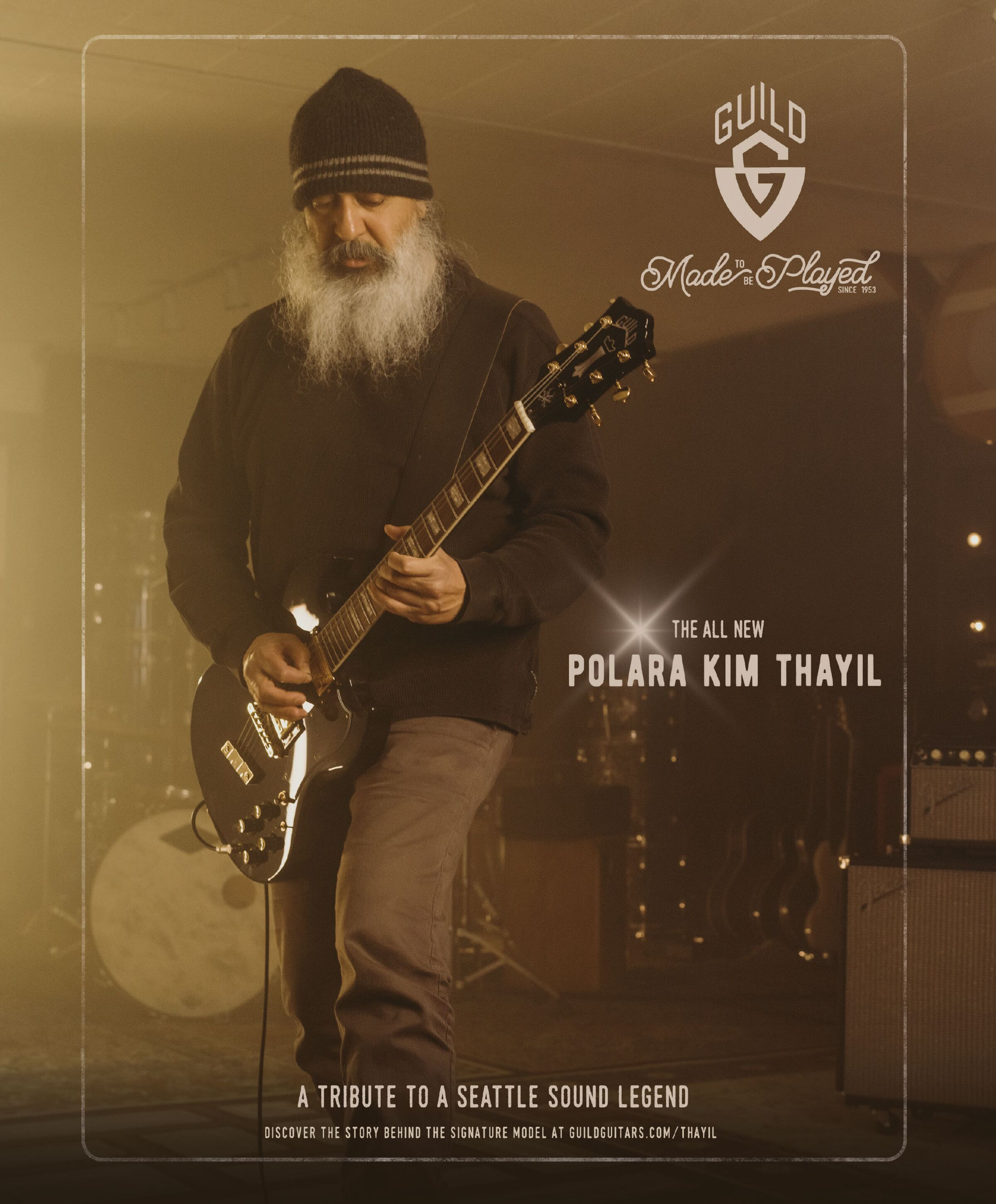
How is the war impacting your music?

The war radically changed my life, and now, life and emotions directly affect the music I'm creating. On this album, I tried to concentrate on what's happening in my country and, even in this instrumental music, aim to touch on important topics.

Tell us about the Ukrainian players on *Surfing*?

I invited many Ukrainian musicians to take part; even if there are no national motives in the tracks, the progressive sound we made together is the Ukrainian sound today. For example, the band Hyphen Dash recorded their parts in Kyiv during an air raid, sometimes hiding in a bomb shelter. Ukraine is full of brave people and talents – I am sure that everyone who listens to *Surfing* will be convinced of it. ***– Pete Prown***

Roman Bulakhov: Kostya Borovski.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DOM MARTIN

More Than a Feeling

From the first fingerpicked notes of "Hello in There," a gentle, inviting 98-second acoustic instrumental that opens Dom Martin's *Buried in The Hail*, it's clear the Belfast bluesman's musical vision is sprawling – and won't be confined to 12 bars.

That isn't to say Martin has anything against tradition. Heavily influenced by the blues-rock of fellow Irishman Rory Gallagher as well as Roy Buchanan, Martin is more than adept with an electric guitar in hand. But on his latest studio effort, it's his dexterous acoustic playing – on a custom-built Lowden (made with Tasmanian blackwood and sinker redwood) – that gives the album a clear sonic identity, with Martin frequently melding Celtic and other folk traditions with a solid foundation of American roots music.

"The first two albums really weren't produced by me," Martin explained during a rehearsal break in August, just before departing for a Joe Bonamassa blues cruise. "I recorded them and gave free reign to whoever was behind the desk. This one is more hands-on by me. I stuck to my guns from start to finish and wouldn't let anybody change anything. I wouldn't compromise. It's the first album I can really get behind, 100 percent."

Other tracks that further the acoustic theme include "Daylight I Will Find," anchored by a driving Delta-blues riff; the gentle "Government," a slow and meditative number with hints of mysticism that casts a wide-open groove; and "The Fall," a clear album highlight that's part darkness, part light, with cascading fingerstyle lines helping tell the story.

The sonic template is powerfully underscored by Martin's deep, gravel-road vocals and personal, original songwriting, with lyrical content that speaks to Martin's upbringing on the tough streets of Belfast – a historically troubled city with its own rich blues culture – as well as a past marked by addiction (and subsequent recovery) and the loss 11 years ago of his father – his musical mentor, playing partner, and best friend.

"That's where traditional Irish music came into it, as like a form of therapy, as an outlet, because a lot of their songs are terribly sad," Martin says. "And that's blues in a different format. It's borne out of trauma, out of terrible times. Like Peter Green said, 'It's more than a 12-bar progression.' It really is. Blues is a feeling. It's a color, first and foremost, but it's a feeling after. Some of the songs I play aren't classified as blues. I would call them blues. But a lot of people wouldn't. They're not traditional blues, but they come from a place borne of trauma."

Martin is keen on writing his own songs. The lone exception on ***Buried In the Hail*** is an evocative reading of Willie Nelson's "Crazy," which starts with spare, haunting electric lines in the spirit of Jeff Buckley before breaking into a wide-open, slow-blues outing. Other electric-oriented tracks include the riff-heavy "Belfast Blues" and "Unhinged," a six-minute slab of blues-rock bombast.

Martin previously was frequently seen sporting a "partscaster" SX body with Tonerider pickups and a Stratocaster neck. But he has since moved on to another Tele copy assembled by Izzy Buholzer of Gulfcaster Custom Guitars. Martin acquired the axe while touring last year with Eric Gales.

"Picture Rory Gallagher's Strat – that battered old '61. Now imagine if that had been a Telecaster from the very start. That's what I told Izzy; if Rory's Strat had been a Tele, that's what I want. So he built the whole thing and it looks amazing, and it's such a good player. He did such a good job. It took over all the other guitars I own."

Speaking of Gallagher, he stands atop the list of Martin's six-string influences, a player who made a profound impact on the young man's musical future. Martin never plays a gig without working in at least one (sometimes several) Gallagher tunes. In Martin's mind, it's not just about paying tribute. It's about repaying a musical debt.

"Rory has been with me since day one," he says. "My earliest memory of anything was Rory and that sound. My dad gave me a tape – *Live In Europe* on one side and *Blueprint* on the other – and I listened to it every day for years and years until it broke and I taped it, it broke and I taped it, until it didn't play anymore. But I love everything it represented to me as a kid. It was just such an escape, such an outlet. It made me feel better. It gave a sanctuary and a lot of inner peace." ***– Sean McDevitt***

Dom Martin: Jim Heal.

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Scott Holt: Buffy Holt.

SCOTT HOLT

Mojo Risin' in Foghat

It's been more than 50 years since Foghat unleashed its freewheeling rock and roll, steeped in its blues beginnings. *Sonic Mojo* is its first studio album in seven years, and the first with lead vocalist/guitarist Scott Holt joining founding drummer/bandleader Roger Earl, longtime lead guitarist Bryan Bassett, and bassist Rodney O'Quinn.

Holt, who played with Buddy Guy for years and has enjoyed a solo career, has been part of the Foghat family for years, co-writing songs and playing in the side project Earl and the Agitators. He replaced Charlie Huhn.

How did you officially join the band?

I was at the band's studio in Florida, where we were writing and getting ready to put together the new record with Charlie singing. But, one day, Charlie sent an e-mail saying that he was retiring, so we immediately pivoted from writing to learning the Foghat catalog, because they had gigs coming up.

I've been in their camp since about 2016, when they were working on *Under the Influence*. The way we hit it off, it was a really creative environment, and it inspires me to write. Bryan and I fire each other up. It's a really fun situation.

How did you work out the guitar parts with Bryan? He plays killer lead and slide.

With the catalog stuff, we try to re-create the guitar parts faithful to the way Dave [Peverett] and Rod [Price] did them. I think Bryan would agree that we feel it's a responsibility to the music and the fans; when you come to the show, you want to hear "Slow Ride," and you want it to sound like it did on the radio. You don't want to hear our jazz interpretation (laughs.) Bryan plays the things that Rod played and I play the things Dave played, with a certain degree of poetic license. I've always approached those from an improvisational standpoint. With my past work with Buddy Guy and my solo stuff, there was never any kind of worked-out solos. You just responded to the music. I've been doing it for 30 years, so I don't know how to do it any other way at this point (laughs).

Foghat sprang from Savoy Brown, led by guitarist Kim Simmonds, who co-wrote three of the songs on *Sonic Mojo* shortly before he passed.

We listened to those tracks, and "Time Slips Away" was hard to listen to the first time. It's a direct song about mortality written by a guy staring it square in the face. It was such a beautiful lyric. He sent us demos – vocals, maybe a rhythm guitar, and a drum machine or click track. They were real stripped-down, but they gave us a lot of room on how to treat the song.

Which guitars did you play?

On the record, I played a G&L ASAT I've been using forever and just love. When I got the gig with Foghat, I celebrated by getting a guitar from LsL Instruments. They built me a monster. It's shaped like a Telecaster but has two humbuckers with split coils, to get a single-coil sound if I need to. Those are the two electrics I played. On "I Wish I'd a Been There," I used Bryan's acoustic; I can't remember what it is, but it's an amazing guitar.

There are some musical surprises on *Sonic Mojo*.

A band is a unique mechanism. You can't unplug one component then plug something else in and expect to get the same result. Certainly, when I stepped into this band, my background is the blues, and that's my wheelhouse. My references are blues guys. We sat down to work the arrangement for "Drivin' On," and Roger and I were talking. I said, "I think we ought to go like Slim Harpo, and maybe a little bit John Lee Hooker." That's my language. Bryan and Rodney [also] know the blues.

To me, Foghat is a celebration of American music. I've gone back and listened to everything in their catalog. They didn't just do blues – they did R&B and rockabilly things. There's a strong Chuck Berry thread through the whole history of Foghat. They don't just celebrate one lane of American music; they grab from everything, which appeals to me. I've always found that more interesting than being a one-trick pony. ***– Bret Adams***

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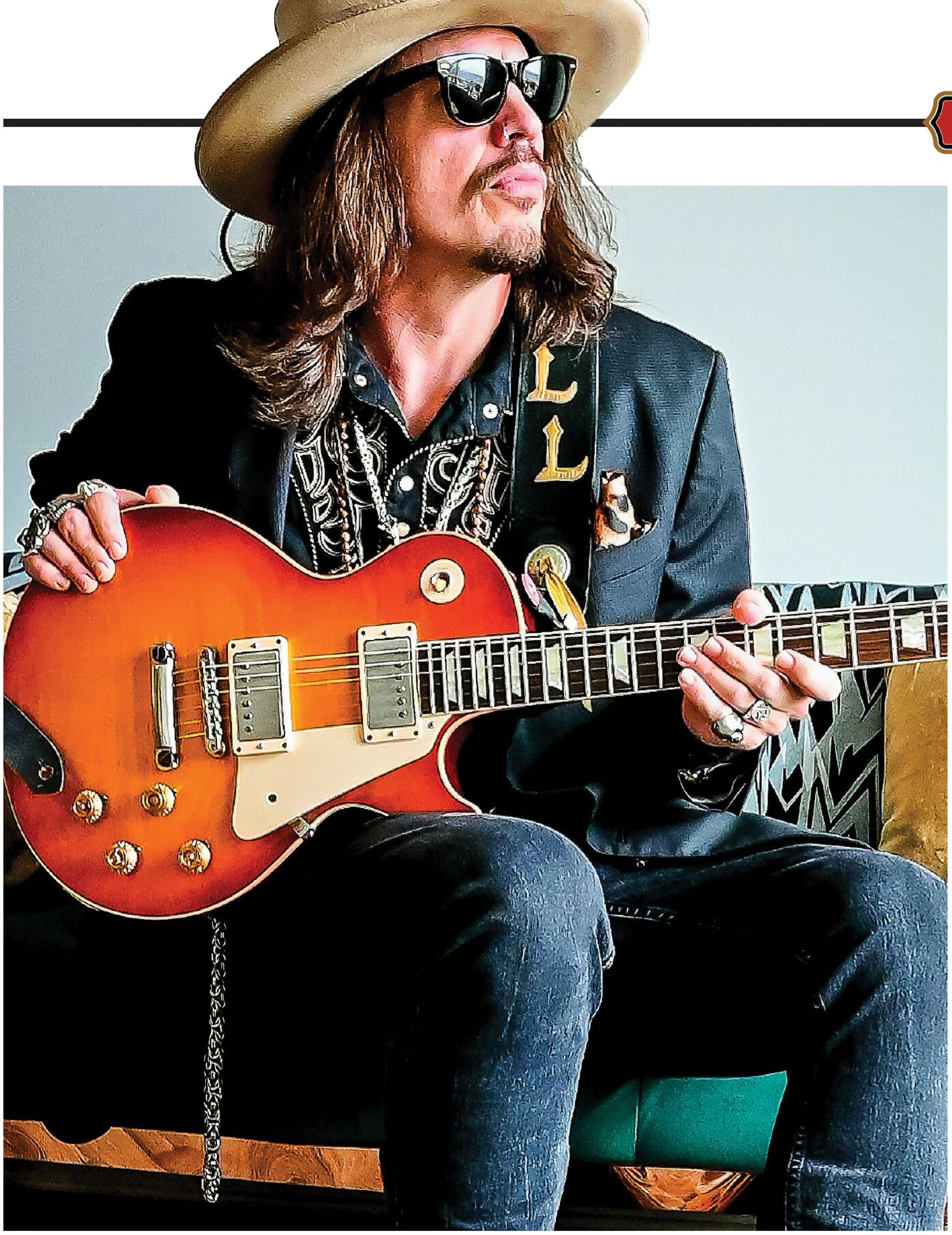


LANCE LOPEZ

Hard-Time Music

Lance Lopez is back and better than ever. *Trouble Is Good* is wild, hellacious, and packed with three essential influences – Jimi Hendrix, B.B. King, and the Reverend Billy F Gibbons. It does the music good.

Produced and co-written by Joey Sykes and full of no-holds-barred blues-rock intensity with life experiences to back it up, *Trouble* a serious guitar record.

Was *Trouble Is Good* recorded during the pandemic?

Yes, and that's the whole thing about it – it's a Covid-era piece. "Trouble is good" means being pushed in directions you normally wouldn't have been pushed. I did most of the guitar tracks at home – all the lead guitar tracks and some of the vocals. I'd been talking about a home recording setup for years, but always focused more on touring, playing live, and working. Then, when I'd get home, I'd say, "We'll do it next time." That extended period of Covid downtime finally pushed me in that direction.

That was one of the good things that came from the trouble. Then, I also got a job repairing guitar amps and doing amp mods while I was making the record. I was working with Joey Sykes, who was tracking in L.A. and was sending tracks to me in Nashville, where I initially put guitar and vocals on.

You also had drummer Gregg Bissonette on a track.

Right. We made scratch tracks with friends, then once we'd get the idea, we'd say, "Hey, we really need to have a great musician play on the track." For "Jam With Me," we immediately thought of Gregg. He has a whole vibe and feel, and it was an honor to have him on the record.

What kind of amplification did you use?

I had my own collection of amps, *and* all the amps I was working on; I used a '69 Marshall, a Bogner Helios 100, and added some Category 5 amps. I love the Category 5 TBR-50, which is a Bassman clone and has become one of my main amps.

I played through Buddy Guy's Bassman, and *had to* have that sound. It's perfect for the rooms I play. I was overcompensating with big amps in small clubs, and I forgot how perfect that Bassman is. I played a Category 5 TBR-50 in Nashville and it had the Buddy Guy thing with a reverb circuit. The TBR-50 came from Joe Bonamassa wanting a brown '60s reverb tank in a Bassman. I love the speaker combination, and it got a lot of love on the new record. I also used an array of vintage Marshalls, like a 1970 Super Bass 100. But I've gone back to combos.

You also play resonator.

Oh, yeah! On the title track, I absolutely played some dobro. We wanted to do epic, three-part songs, and the title track was the Covid-era piece. Basically, if you lived through 2020, you had the blues (laughs). We wanted to embody that period, and that was our tribute. It was hard-time music for hard times.

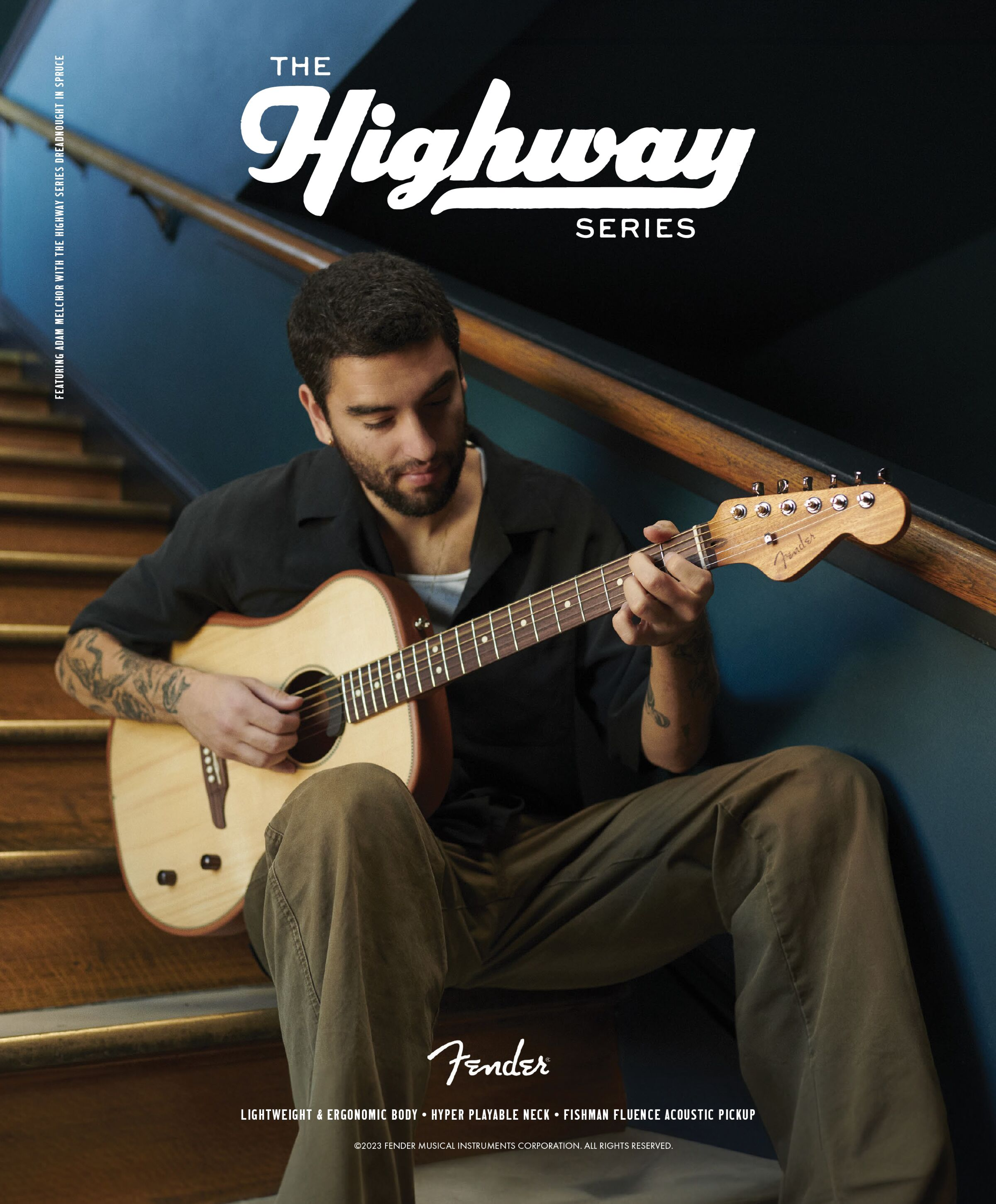
Did your Firebird get much work?

That was one of the main guitars. At the beginning of the record, you hear the Blues Bird right off the bat – the Firebird tuned to open G. A lot of the bottleneck tracks were also it. On "Jam With Me," I played slide on my white Flying V. Everything else was the Firebird – it's a Custom Shop '65 reissue, but the profile of the neck is a late-'50s Les Paul. Firebirds tend to have thinner necks, but I like fat necks and that one is perfect. The pickups are perfect, it stays in tune. It's amazing.

What did you use on "Take A Swing?"

That was "The Creeker," which is a Les Paul Custom Shop '59 reissue. Billy Gibbons loves this guitar. I used two full stacks with four 4x12s. One was the Bogner Helios 100. The other was the Marshall Super Bass 100. As far as drives, I used a TC Electronic Mojomojo Overdrive, which I used like a Klon. The wah was built by Detrick FX; it's called the 1969 Experience Wah, and it's the best wah I've ever owned. ***– Oscar Jordan***

Lance Lopez: Karina Chiechi.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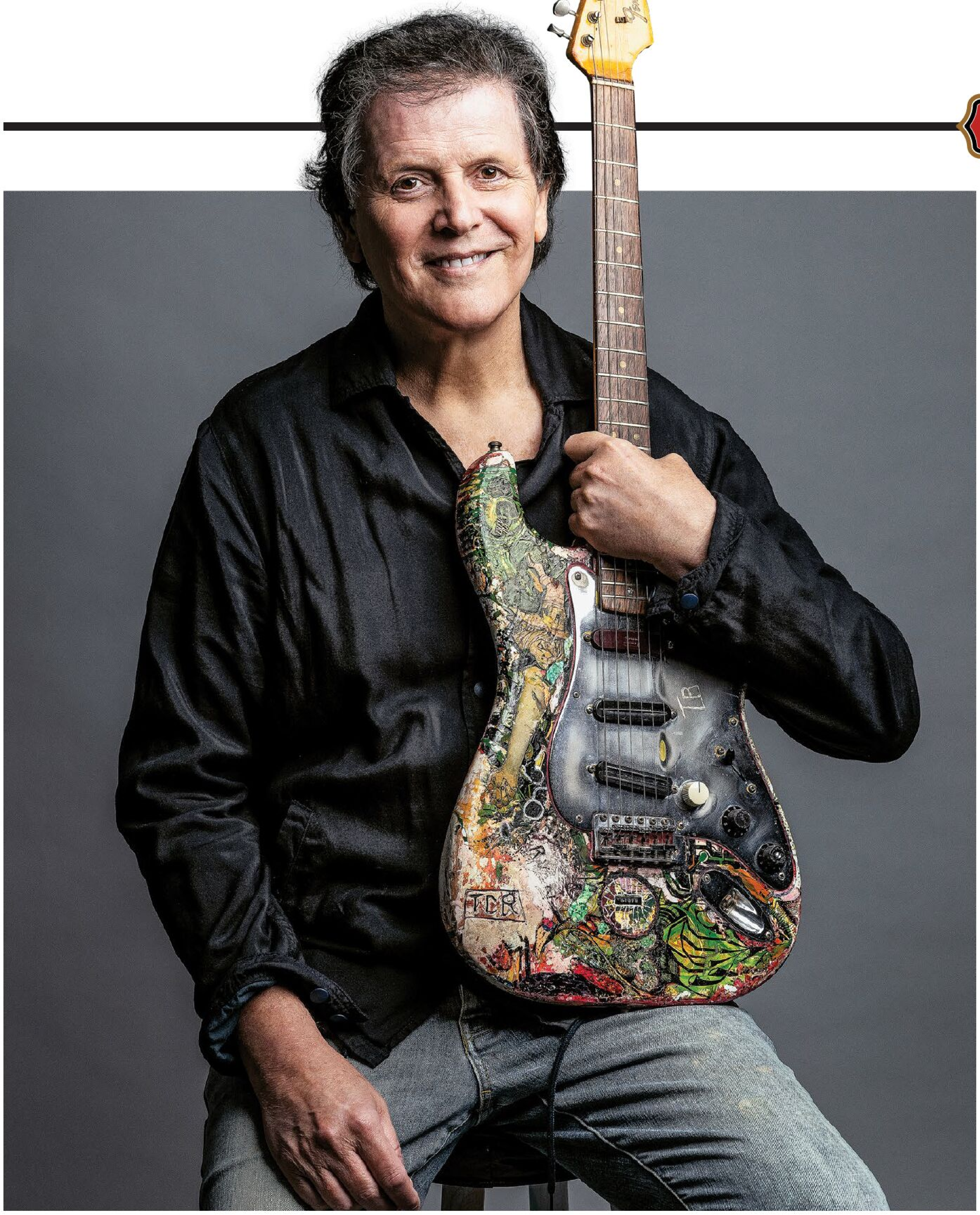


TREVOR RABIN

Return with Rio

It's hard to believe that 34 years have passed since Trevor Rabin issued a solo album featuring his vocals. But it's true – *Can't Look Away* was released in 1989. His new album, *Rio*, is stylistically similar to his '80s/'90s work with Yes, and finds the South African multi-tasking, instrumentally, while handling most of the vocal chores. He even supplied the album's cover art.

Why so long between solo albums with vocals?

I started doing film scores in '94 – I made 50 film scores and hundreds of TV things; I look back now and it seems like yesterday. That's one excuse. The other is I had so little time – I was writing and getting ideas, and it wasn't very truncated. The gap certainly wasn't intentional.

What was your guitar setup for *Rio*?

I used a Tele with a B-bender, my Stratocaster, and my signature Alvarez from '84.

And your amplifiers?

I used the Fractal Axe-Fx II quite a bit because I got quite used to it on the road when I did the Anderson, Rabin, and Wakeman tour. It's just really convenient. There were tracks where I just blasted out a couple of Marshalls, but for the most part, it was the Fractal. Also, the two-rack-space Line 6 from ages ago. I still use that a lot.

Which songs on *Rio* are you most proud of, guitar-wise?

I really enjoyed getting into the B-bender – there's a song called "Goodbye," which was a lot of fun. I tried to go for the chicken-pickin' thing, and make it as smooth as possible. There's a song called "Oklahoma," which, guitar-wise, is pretty straightforward, and I had a lot of fun with it. And "Thandi" is definitely guitar-driven from start to end, which I was very pleased with.

Talk more about your Stratocaster.

I've heard people say it was 1962, but I checked the serial number and I think it's a '64.

In the '70s, I was playing a semi-acoustic Harmony – I loved Hank Marvin and, obviously, Jimi Hendrix. There was a lovely guy, Denis Joint, who worked at a store in Johannesburg called Bothners, and I told him, "I don't have a lot of money, but I want to buy a Stratocaster." He said, "We don't have any new ones, but we have some very old stock." At that time, having an old Fender wasn't the same as it is now. He went into the back room and dusted off this case – there were a couple of them – and there was this red '64 Strat. He said, "I can give you a deal on this." I said, "Done," and that's how I got it.

You've modded it through the years...

While I was on the road with the band Rabbit, and at the end of a show, I would throw my guitar to my tech, and he usually caught it. But one time – I might have thrown it too hard – but it landed on the floor and the headstock snapped off. I drove back to Johannesburg and an instrument shop lent me a Tele neck that fit perfectly. I had that for quite a while. John Green fixed it, and it's never been better.

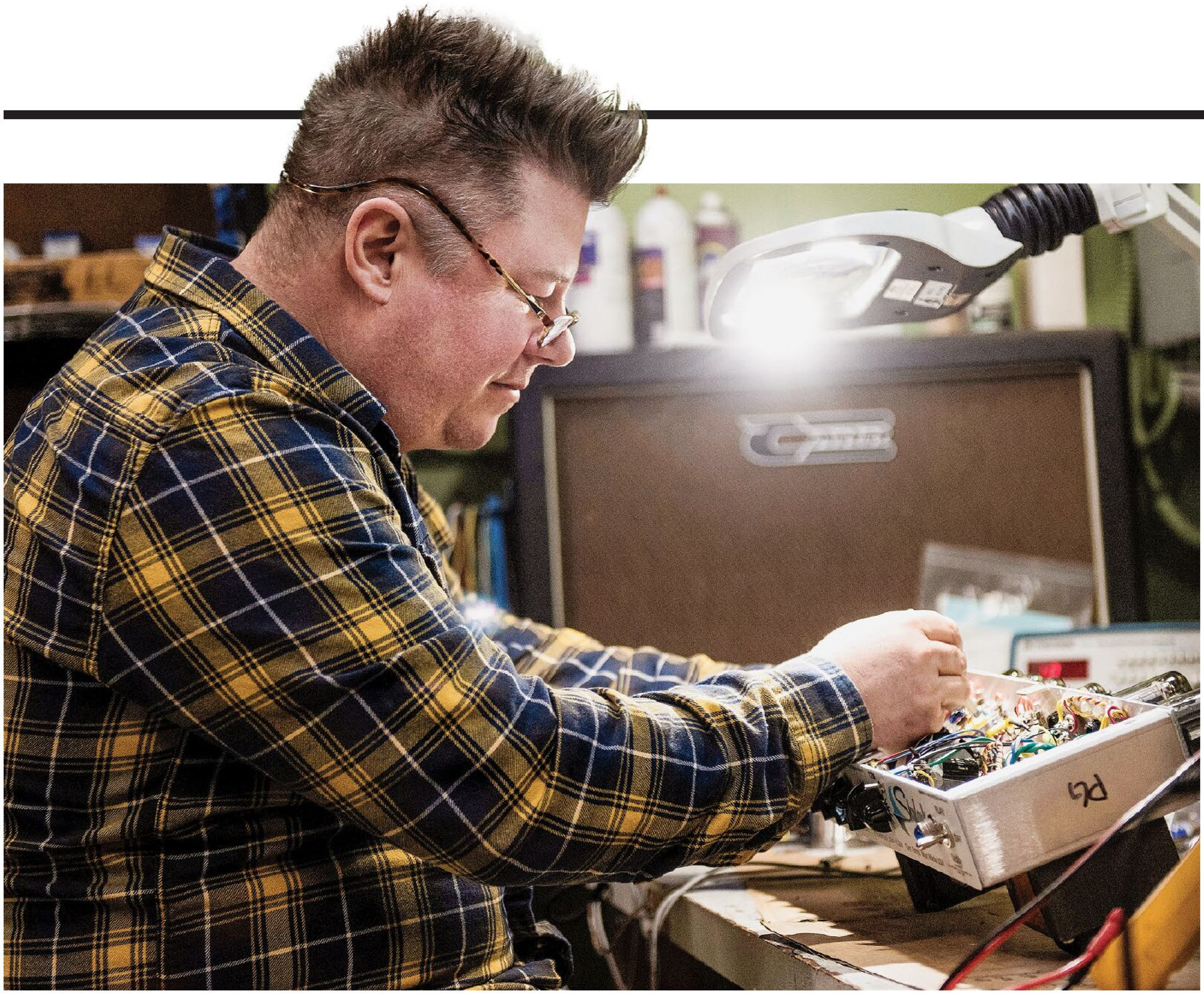
Later, I was having problems with one of the pickups being noisy, so it now has a Bill Lawrence L250 and DiMarzio FS-1.

What do you recall about the guitar solo in "Owner of a Lonely Heart"?

I've read so much stuff about that – which is mostly incorrect. I remember the producer [Trevor Horn] saying I used a 12-string Rickenbacker. There's no Rickenbacker on the track. I don't even know what kind of guitar it was – it was a 12-string built for Chris Squire, which I used on certain parts, but it's mostly the Strat. The very fuzzy beginning of the song was on a Strat, but when it goes into the track and the drums enter, it changes to a Les Paul. The verse is the Strat, and the solo is a Strat. I'd used the sound – with a fifth on top – before, on a Manfred Mann's Earth Band song called "Redemption Song."

The solo was totally off the cuff. There's a little flurry just before the solo ends that I wasn't very happy with. I said, "I really want to drop that," and Chris was determined to not have one note changed. So, I think we kept it. ***– Greg Prato***

Trevor Rabin: Hristo Shindov.



STEVE CARR

Twenty-Five Years of Tonemaking

In the mid '90s, Steve Carr was a guitarist playing weekends and working weeknights as a waiter in a swank French restaurant in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

In 1998, he acted on an idea that he'd been kicking around for awhile. Like any picker, he had a refined taste in tone – and in his mind's eye (ear?) dwelled the perfect amp. With an electronics proficiency developed after several years repairing amps, he bought parts and started building it for himself.

"It combined aspects of my two favorite amps – a '64 Deluxe Reverb and a modified 50-watt non-Master-Volume Marshall," he said. "The goal was to put them together, with more power and two channels."

The result became the Slant 6V, and it launched his company, Carr Amplifiers. We recently chatted with Steve about his 25 years in business.

What spurred you to become a full-time "amp guy"?

In the fall of 1998, I sold the first Slant 6V that I'd built, other than the one for myself. By that time, I'd been leaning into the idea of giving amp-making a go, and in mid 1999, I dedicated myself to it. I had only one dealer at the time – Indoor Storm, in Raleigh, North Carolina. But I packed a van with amps and drove around the Northeast and Midwest, intent on creating a network; Matchless had just gone out of business (*Ed. Note: Matchless resumed operations in '01.*) and I figured there was space for a new brand, so I visited their dealers. I picked up a handful, which propelled us forward.

I owe a lot to Indoor Storm because they went out on a limb and ordered amps from me as a new builder, and they taught me about how retail business works. They also really pushed the brand.

After the Slant 6V, what was your next model?

In May of '99, I introduced the Rambler, which is like a blackface Princeton Reverb with a tweed Pro power section. I have especially fond memories of the Rambler because about a month after I started sending them to dealers, I quit my day job, fingers crossed that I wouldn't have to go begging to get it back (laughs).

In those early days, did you give much thought to how you'd expand the line?

Not really, and things grew organically over time; I added a new amp every one to two years while discontinuing amps that didn't sell. That has worked well and gives me time to conceptualize new ideas, work through designs, and do the associated work – faceplate design, transformer and chassis designs, logos. Typically, it takes a year to create a new model, and I often end up in a different place than where the concept started. Amps lead me to what they want to be, like a sonic divining rod (laughs).

What has – and continues to – set your amps apart?

I think it's the original designs that combine the vibe and feel of classic amps. I bring what I like most in archetypal amps and add usable new features and extended sonic range. I think of myself as a collage artist who brings together various vibes while adding my own tweaks.

Also, our component choices are deliberate and marry new with old, for organic feel – carbon-comp resistors from the '50s and '60s, Solen Fast Caps in the power supply, U.S.-made Jupiter signal caps and custom TMI transformers. I try *so* many things to achieve effortless, pleasing tone and feel. That's the best part of my job.

Another key element is our cabinetry. We're one of the very few companies that builds cabs in-house, which allows us to be very stylish *and* offer unparalleled quality.

When did you hire your first employee?

My first employee was hired in mid 1999 and he worked with me for more than 10 years.

How many do you have now?

We have seven full-time and five part-time. Two of the guys have close to 20 years with us.

What are your goals or expectations moving forward?

I want to stay creative and keep coming up with fun models. These days, I like to stray further from the Fender and Marshall midpoints.

What are your thoughts on the industry in 2023, and what do you hope the future holds?

My hope is people continue to love playing guitar. There was a lot of talk in the 2000s about kids not getting into it and that guitar was fading away, but we haven't seen that play out. Guitar is here to stay, and Carr Amps is lucky to be part of its progress. Twenty-five years of handcrafted electronics and cabinetry combined with honest customer care are why we're still here. If it ain't broke... – ***Ward Meeker*** VG

HALF-STACK HEAVEN

The Park Model 1229

BY DAVE HUNTER

Vintage Park amplifiers have long offered happy hunting for those seeking stealthy "Marshall in disguise" kicks. But the maker used the sister brand to try a few nifty circuit changes, too, which makes them all the more interesting for Brit-amp aficionados to explore.

In the 1980s and '90s, when rock guitarists were chasing great original amps that logged the classic tones of a decade or two before, Park often floundered in a market where your full stack of cred really had to have the Marshall name on the front. Come the increasing collectibility of the Marshall legend, though, and soaring prices of vintage examples, the laws of supply and demand caught up with the notion that a Marshall with a different name on it might be even more interesting than the standard issue. And while any Park made from 1965 to around 1980 was indeed a sort of "Marshall in disguise," it was often also an amp that concealed a few fascinating internal alterations to the Marshall standard, in addition to its alternative cosmetics.

Jim Marshall devised the original Park line three years into his reign as an amp maker, as a sneaky and creative piece of marketing brinksmanship. In the early years of Marshall, the Jones and Crossland music store in Birmingham served as a semi-official Marshall distributor for the north of England, but that shop was cut out of directly handling Marshall business in 1965, when the London amp maker agreed to a bigger and broader distribution deal with U.K. music-industry giant Rose-Morris. But, shop owner Johnny Jones had long been a pal of Jim Marshall, who seemed keen to enable his friend's continued access to his increasingly popular amplifiers.

Jones and Crossland was already handling a Park "house brand" line of guitars and other instruments, purportedly dubbed in honor of Jones' wife's maiden name. Marshall and Jones devised the ploy of giving Marshall-built amps a few minor design twists to sidestep exclusivity issues, along with some visual alterations, and the rest is history: Marshall continued supplying its sought-after tube amps to Jones and Crossland for Birmingham and Northern England, with the Park name on them.

1978 PARK MODEL 1229 LEAD AMP

- Preamp tubes: three ECC83 (a.k.a. 12AX7)
- Output tubes: two EL34
- Rectifier: solid-state
- Controls: Bass channel: Volume, Treble, Bass; Normal channel: Volume, Treble, Bass; shared: Presence
- Speakers: four 12" Celestion "blackback" G12H-30
- Output: approximately 100 watts RMS

Amp and photos courtesy of Derrick B.

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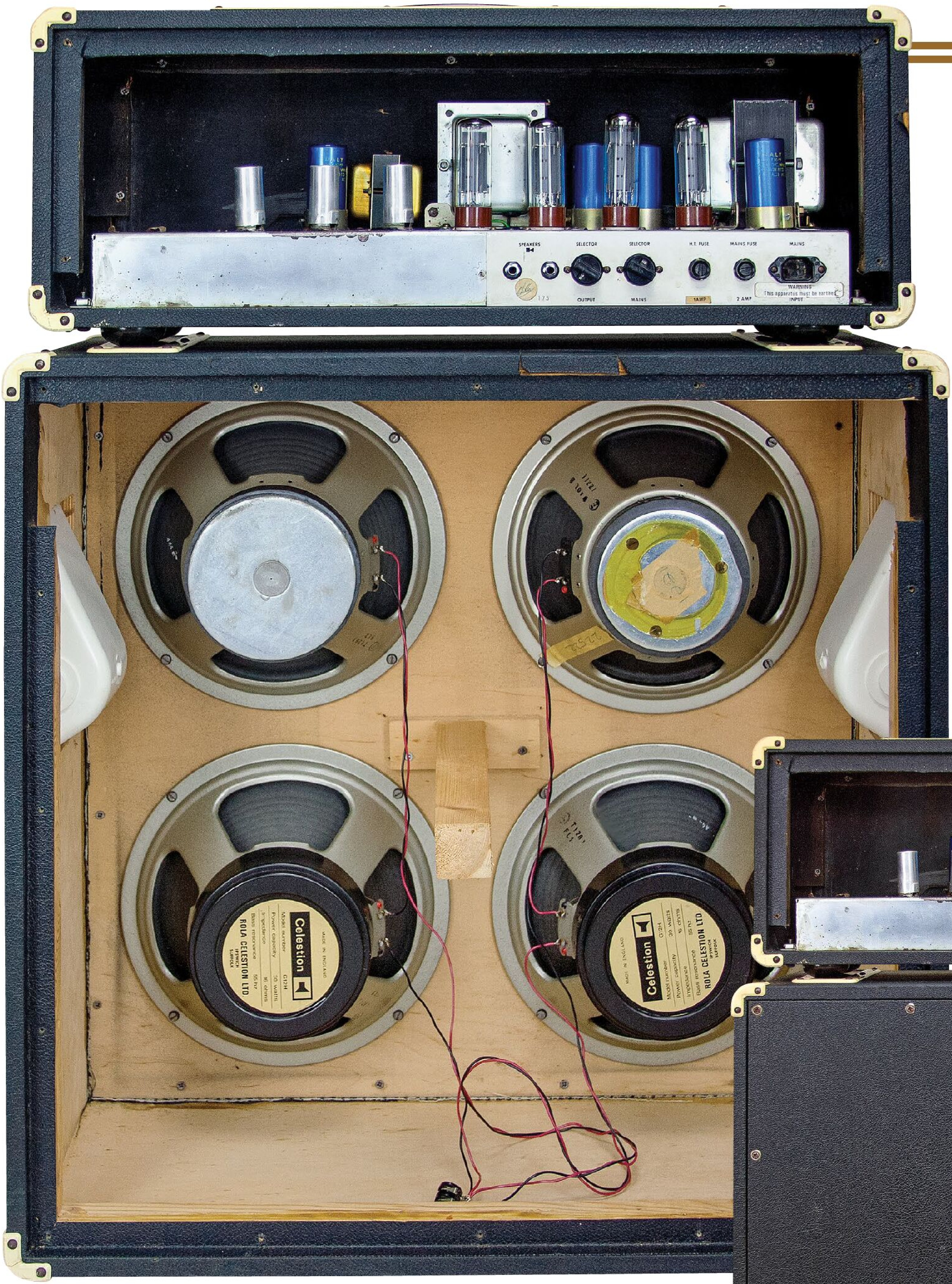
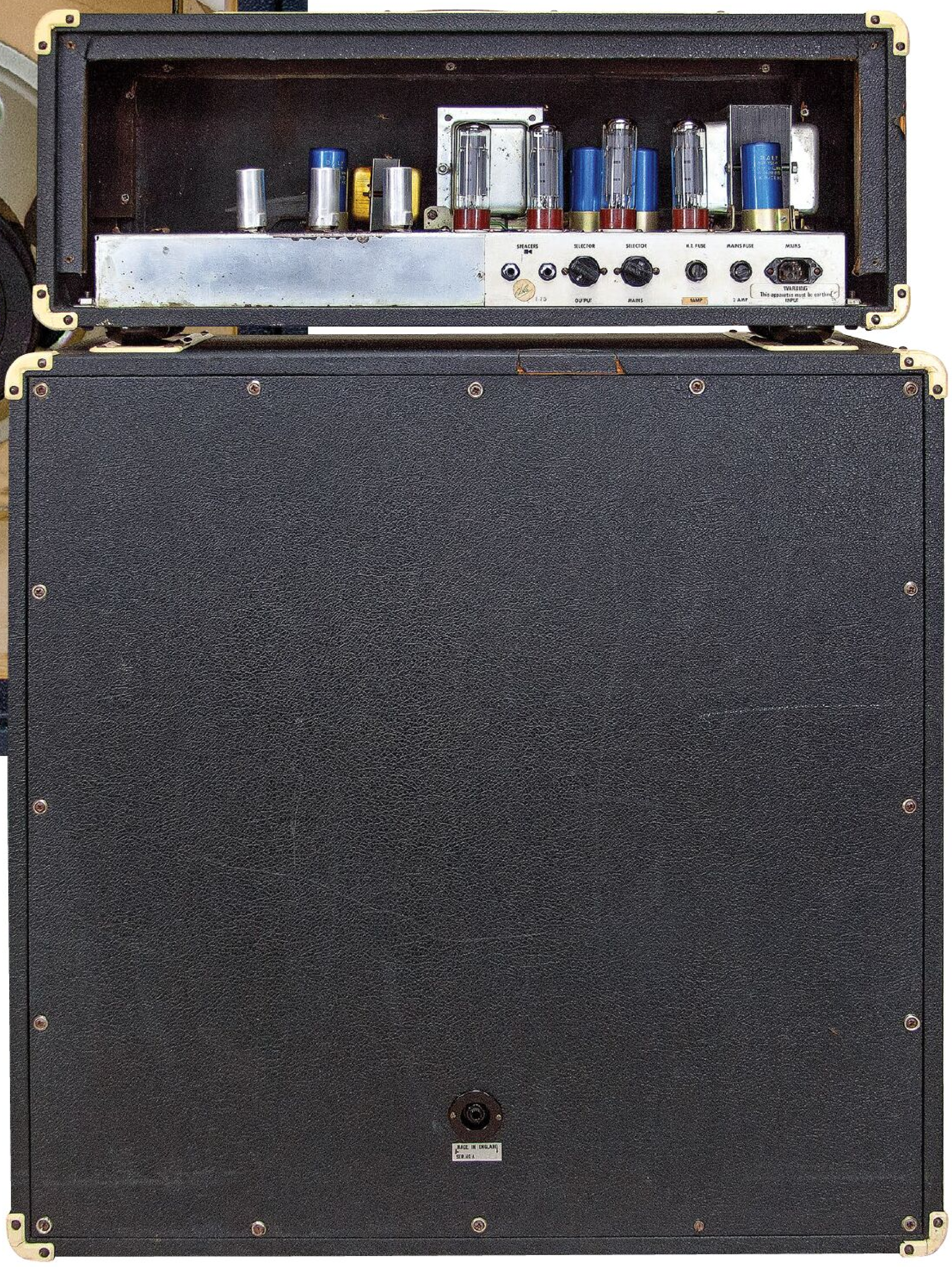


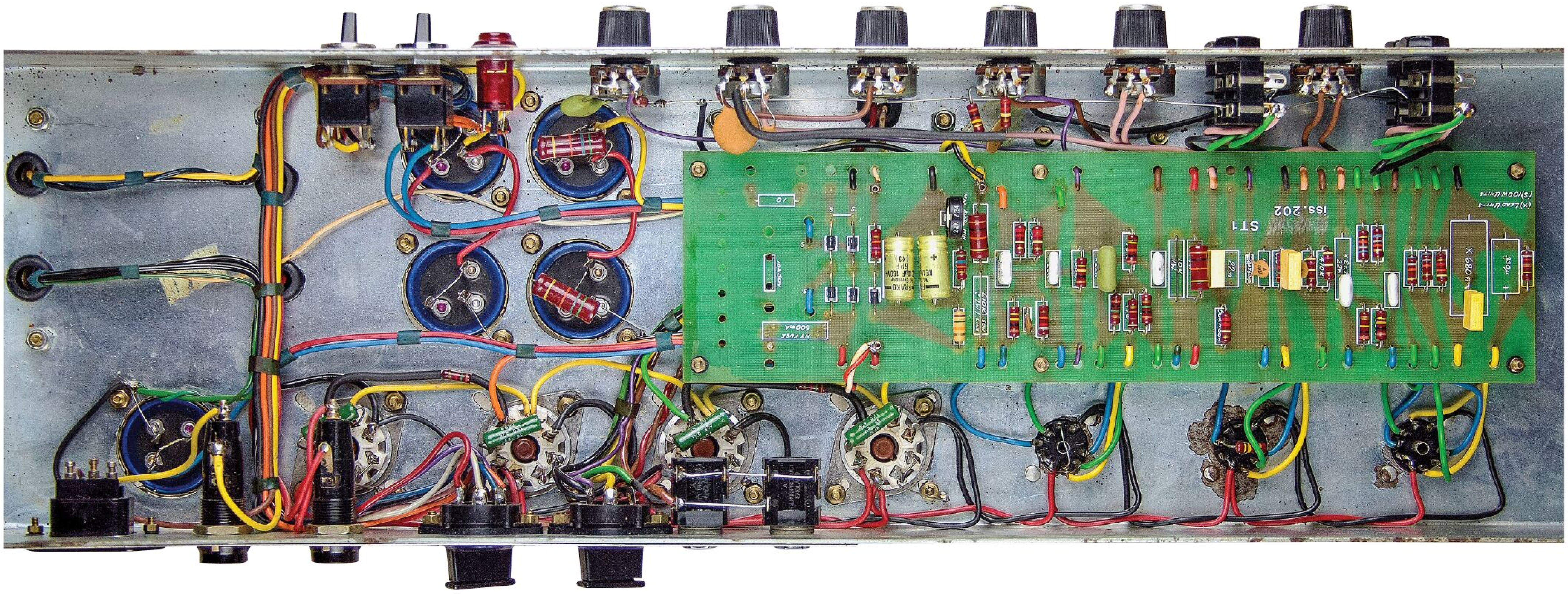


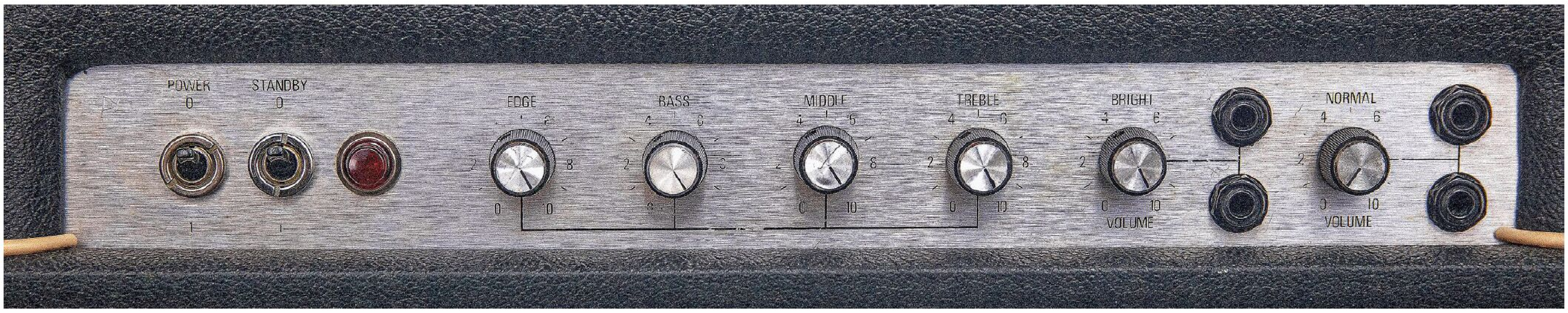
Removing the back panels reveals a quartet of "blackback" Celestion G12H-30 speakers. Four EL34 output tubes power the 1229's 100-watt engine room.

Early Park models usually followed their Marshall doppelgängers pretty closely, with enough alteration in the looks and layout to keep them from being litigiously similar. The first Park 45s, for example, had a top-rear-mounted control panel (rather than the JTM45's front-mounted panel), the Volume controls for its two channels were separated between the channels' respective dual inputs, and the name of the Presence control was changed to Brightness. Sneaky, eh? Furthermore, instead of back-painting the plexiglas panels in gold like the Marshalls, those of the Parks were generally black or silver. Otherwise, they used much the same circuit and KT66 output tubes as the Marshall rendition.

A favorite of the late '60s, the Park 75, was a close counterpart to the legendary plexi-era Marshall JMP 50 Lead amp, but it used a pair of big KT88 output tubes in place of the Marshall's EL34s, making it a fierce and loud alternative. Players and collectors have often observed that many early Parks trailed their Marshall counterparts in circuit and component evolution, and were possibly even constructed to "use up" leftover parts. Rather than making them appear a second-rate brand to their parent company, however, this has recently made many Parks even more desirable than their closest siblings in the Marshall camp, in a market that seems to continually put greater value on early renditions of such designs.

Rather conversely, though, Park amps from further into the run often appeared to be a testing ground for modifications





and variations on Marshall circuits. Sometimes, these were found in the form of hotter preamp stages, different output-stage configurations (as with the Park 75), or in the case or this 100-watt 1978 Park Model 1229 Lead amp, a tone stage unlike anything commonly used in the parent company's guitar amps of the day.

"With its four-input configuration, it looks like a typical Model 1959 Lead," owner Derrick B. tells us. "But it's actually a Lead amp with a Baxandall tone stack that's nearly identical to Marshall's post-'78 Superbass. Additionally, there are a few unique signal-cap values that give it a full, open, fat, Fender-like tone without losing its Marshall identity and overdrive snarl. That makes it a very good pedal platform, but I'm also not afraid to crank everything to 10, where you can get really raw, aggressive tones. The Presence knob is labeled 'Edge,' like the Park 1210 Rock head, but pre-dates that amp by a year. They even took the time to grind off the 'Marshall' stencil on the PC board, which I assume was to prevent any conflict with the Marshall distributor."

Marshall also mixed it up some with the cosmetics of this particular 1229, giving it and the accompanying 4x12 cab an elegant look that isn't often seen, and harks back to an earlier era.

"Vintage Park amps are uncommon in the U.K., since they were strictly made to sell outside of normal Marshall distribution," says the owner. "They're even harder to find in the U.S. because they were never sold here. Over the years, I haven't seen many with the 'tuxedo' cosmetics pop up for sale, and have only ever seen examples from 1978, which leads me to believe they were sold briefly and production numbers were low. I've only ever seen one 4x12 like this in the past 25 years, but it was on a message board in the U.K. and was not for sale.

"I purchased the amp from another local player who purchased it while touring the U.K. The instant I saw it, I had to have it!"

The age of bargain Park amps is behind us, so if that "have to have it" feeling is creeping up, you'll have to keep your eyes peeled – and dig deep. **VG**

Remnants of the scrubbed-off Marshall name remain beneath the white "iss.202" on the circuit board (top) below the Volume control – fitting for a circuit so different from that of its Marshall stablemate. The Park's control panel differentiates itself from similar Marshalls by separating the inputs and each channel's Volume control, and by calling the Presence control "Edge."

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Classics

Texas is known for music, especially Austin, which in the mid '70s became a hotbed thanks to clubs like Armadillo World Headquarters, Castle Creek, and Soap Creek Saloon, which mostly hosted "progressive country" acts that were creating a sound at once too radical and traditional for radio.

Clifford Antone with the '52 Precision and good friend Doug Sahm (with an ES-350) at Antone's in 1989.

In the '50s and '60s, East Side clubs like Charlie's Playhouse hosted blues stars B.B. King, Bobby "Blue" Bland, T-Bone Walker, Junior Parker, and others. But by the early '70s, young black music fans were no longer enthralled with the blues, and the scene was essentially shuttered – until a diehard blues fan named Clifford Antone bought an old furniture warehouse downtown at Sixth and Brazos and converted it to a club that could host the only style of music he wanted to hear.

Antone grew up in Port Arthur and learned to love music thanks to his babysitter, a nun who played gospel records. Later, he joined other teens who'd cross the Sabine River to hit Louisiana juke joints, where they'd watch regional blues acts like Clifton Chenier, Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, Lazy Lester, and the Fabulous Boogie Kings.

Antone moved to Austin in '69 to attend the University of Texas, but after getting dinged for selling pot, he dropped out and for several years managed his family's delicatessen. There, he'd play blues on the radio and strum guitar on his breaks. In a 1998 interview with *Vintage Guitar*, he recalled the Austin music scene in '75, which was thriving for certain genres, but…

"Blues was at its lowest point," he said. "Guys were begging for a place to play."

The doors to his club – Antone's Home of the Blues– opened in July of '75. In a neighborhood that college kids didn't visit and playing music they didn't want to hear far from other venues, most nights drew small audiences even as the club's reputation began to grow among musicians. Eventually, though, it became *the* joint, spurring a renaissance of the district and making Austin a certifiable blues town. Then, city official tore down Antone's building to expand a parking ramp.

Undeterred, Clifford briefly reopened on Anderson Lane before settling into the space for which Antone's is best known – a former Shakey's Pizza on Guadalupe, near the UT campus. Through the years, the club hosted a trove of legendary performers – Albert Collins, Albert King, John Lee Hooker, Buddy Guy, Muddy Waters, and others who played every night Tuesday through Saturday, often backed by the club's house band in the '70s – the Fabulous Thunderbirds featuring Jimmie Vaughan and Kim Wilson, or local singers Angela Strehli and Lou Ann Barton. Things were seldom better than the night Albert King and a young Stevie Ray Vaughan jammed together.

"On that stage, they both played some of their absolute best stuff," Antone said.

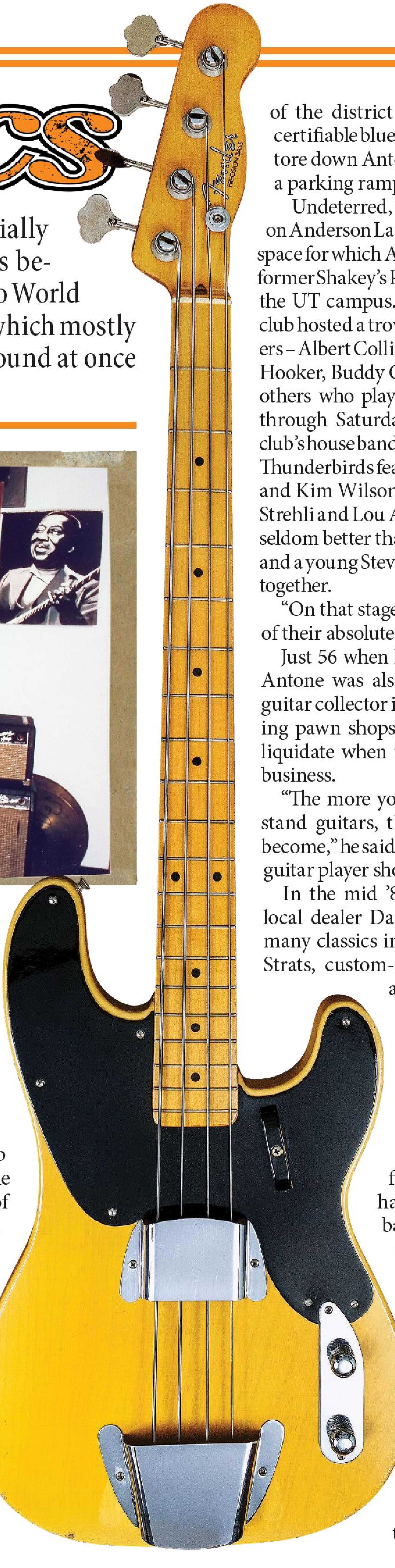
Just 56 when he died in May of 2006, Antone was also a musician and busy guitar collector in the '70s and '80s, visiting pawn shops and helping musicians liquidate when they stepped out of the business.

"The more you deal with and understand guitars, the more interested you become," he said in '98. "And I think every guitar player should have five or six."

In the mid '80s, his friendship with local dealer Danny Thorpe led him to many classics including early Teles and Strats, custom-color Fenders, thinline and hollow Gibsons from the '50s, and this '52 Precision Bass.

"I was at the club one day many years ago when Clifford told me Danny had bought the Precision and a '52 Tele from a couple guys who had played in a country band," said the bass' current owner, John "Toad" Andrews, an accomplished guitarist who has been part of the scene since the late '60s, was a member of Mother Earth (in San Francisco), and is a fan of blackguard Fenders.

Kept ready at the club, Clifford sometimes used the Precision



John Andrews '52 Precision Bass: Romina Olson. Clifford Antone and Doug Sahm: Steven Pumphrey/*Texas Monthly*, courtesy Clifford Antone Foundation.

John Andrews' '52 Precision Bass has a storied history.

to sit in with players he counted as close friends – King, Collins, Guy, Bonnie Raitt, Hubert Sumlin, Pinetop Perkins, Luther Tucker, and others along with local up-and-comers like SRV, Sue Foley, Doyle Bramhall, II, Jake Andrews (Toad's son), and Gary Clark, Jr.

"Cliff had so many great instruments and loved for his musician friends to play them," said Derek O'Brien, another close friend of Antone's who for years led the club's house band, usually playing guitar.

Preparing to serve a prison sentence after a second conviction for dealing marijuana, in '94 and '95, Antone sold several instruments

The bass' original "poodle" case is an extreme rarity.

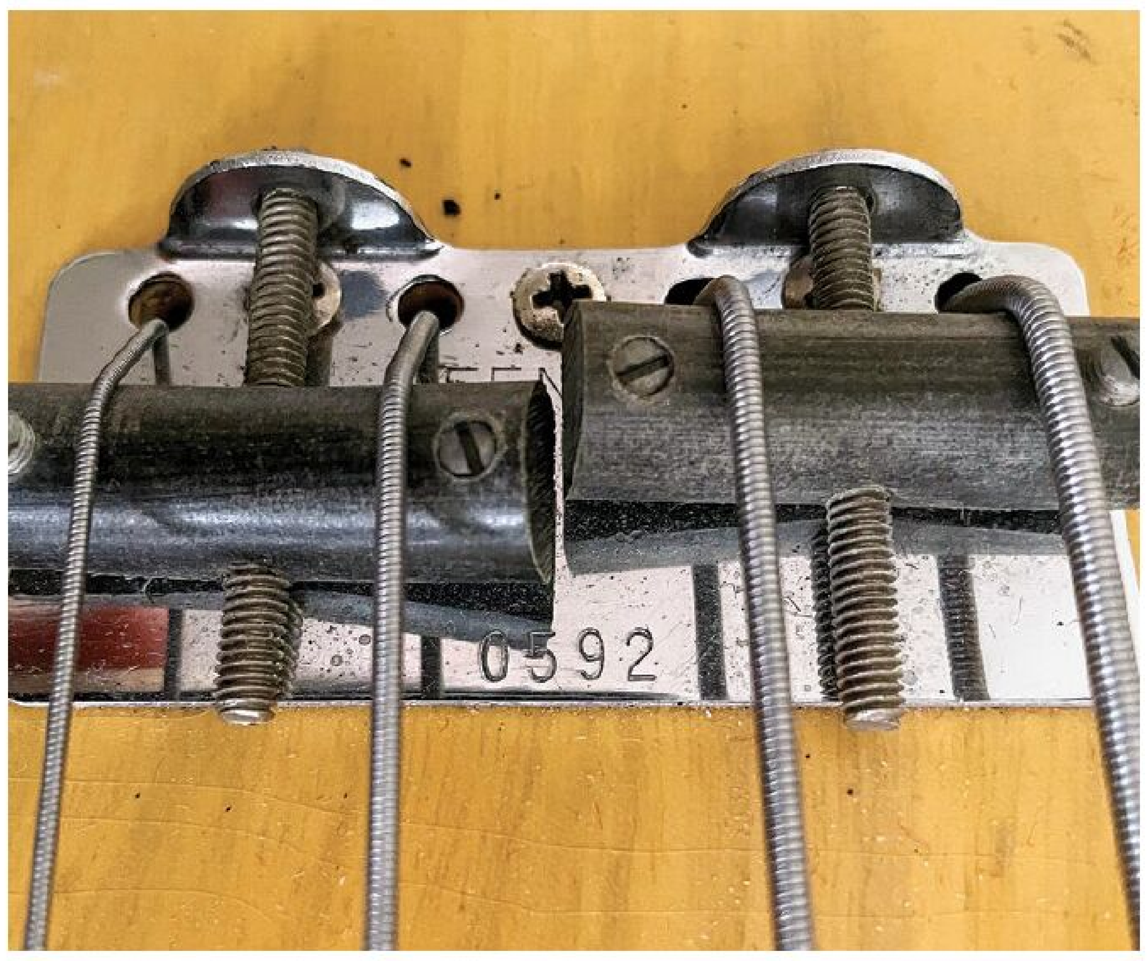
'52 Precision Bass "poodle" case: Rico Ainslie.

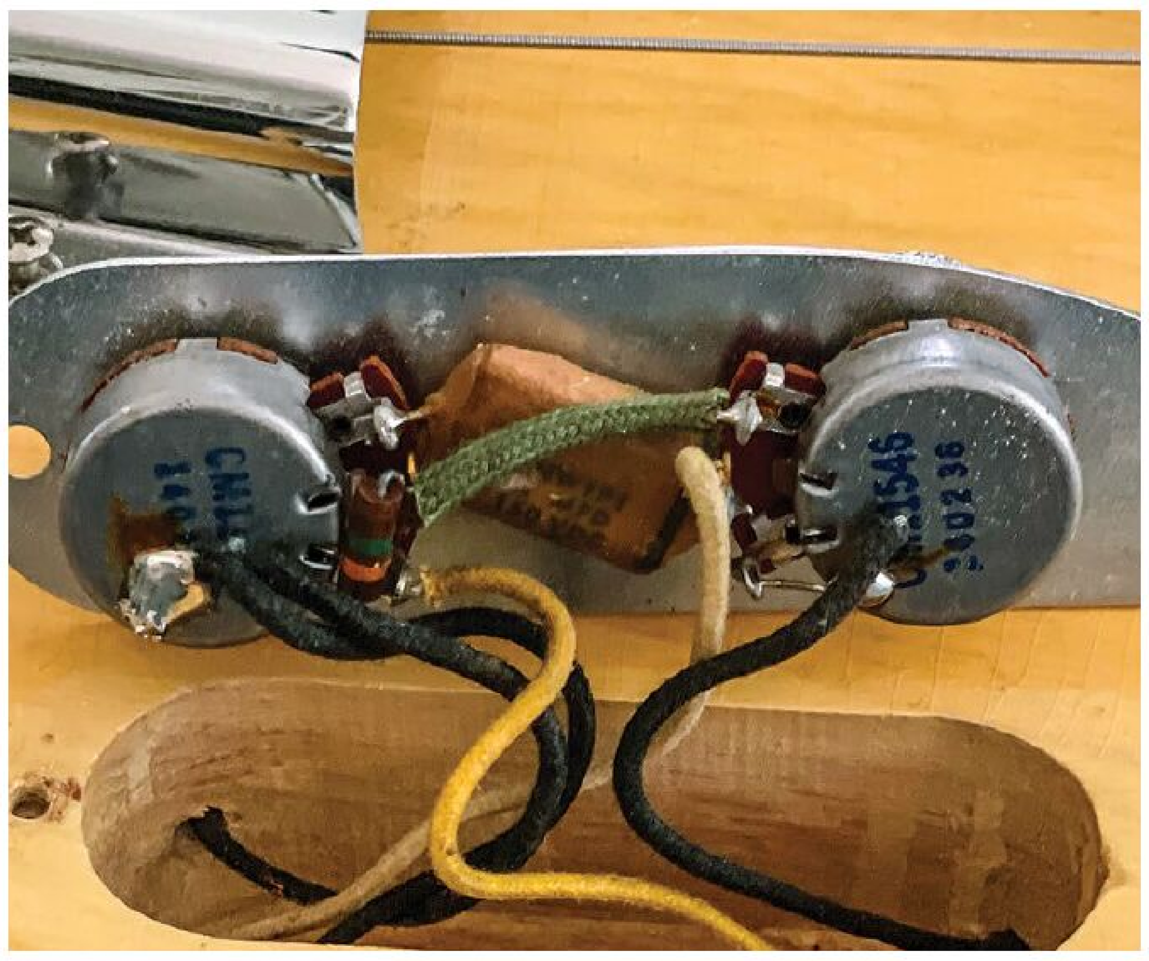
including a '64 Gibson Tal Farlow, '59 ES-335, a '69 ES-330, '57 Byrdland, '59 Epiphone Regent, and the '52 Precision to Dr. Robert Mingea, a fellow collector in Austin. Circa 2005, Mingea sold the Precision to Andrews.

"The pots have a manufacturer's date of the 30th week of '52," said Andrews, who has done some forensics on it. "Which makes sense because very few Precisions were made that year; the production date would likely have been August."

Dave Hinson, an instrument dealer who runs Killer Vintage shops in St. Louis and Dallas, recently appraised Andrews' collection, which includes several early blackguards (his '51 Esquire once owned by "Gatemouth" Brown was profiled in the July '18 issue of *VG*). Given its provenance and near-mint condition, Hinson is confident the Precision would bring $80,000. Andrews insures its original form-fitting "poodle" case for another $15,000, which sounds extreme until he recalls how Fred Stuart, Master Builder in the Fender Custom Shop, told him it may be the only one still in existence.

"When they were tooling-up to make 50th Anniversary 1951 Precision Bass, Fender scoured the country looking for a poodle case, but was unsuccessful, so they had to settle for creating a replica based on a Tele or Strat case, which has a slightly different profile," he said.





The serial number and fiber saddles speak to the Precision's status as early-production, and its pots are dated the 30th week of '52, which coincides with a likely build date that August.

'52 Precision Bass bridge and pots: Rico Ainslie.

Built in the days before sturdier hard cases, the upgrade (from a gig bag) chipboard case had served admirably. Still, time took its toll, and Andrews did his best to restore it.

"It was basically being held together by its fabric liner," he said. "But the fabric wore out just from the weight of the bass. I'm sure Clifford handled it carefully, but after a few decades, it just wasn't holding up."

Not wanting to replace material or otherwise detract from its originality, Andrews removed the duct tape that had been holding its seams together and applied new glue.

With Andrews, the bass has seen a quiet life but was featured in a 2022 episode of "Pawn Stars on the Road" when the show stopped in Austin.

"I was around for a good number of Cliff's guitar and bass buys – I wish I'd kept a diary!" said O'Brien. "And I'm so glad John ended up with the Precision." – ***Ward Meeker*** VG

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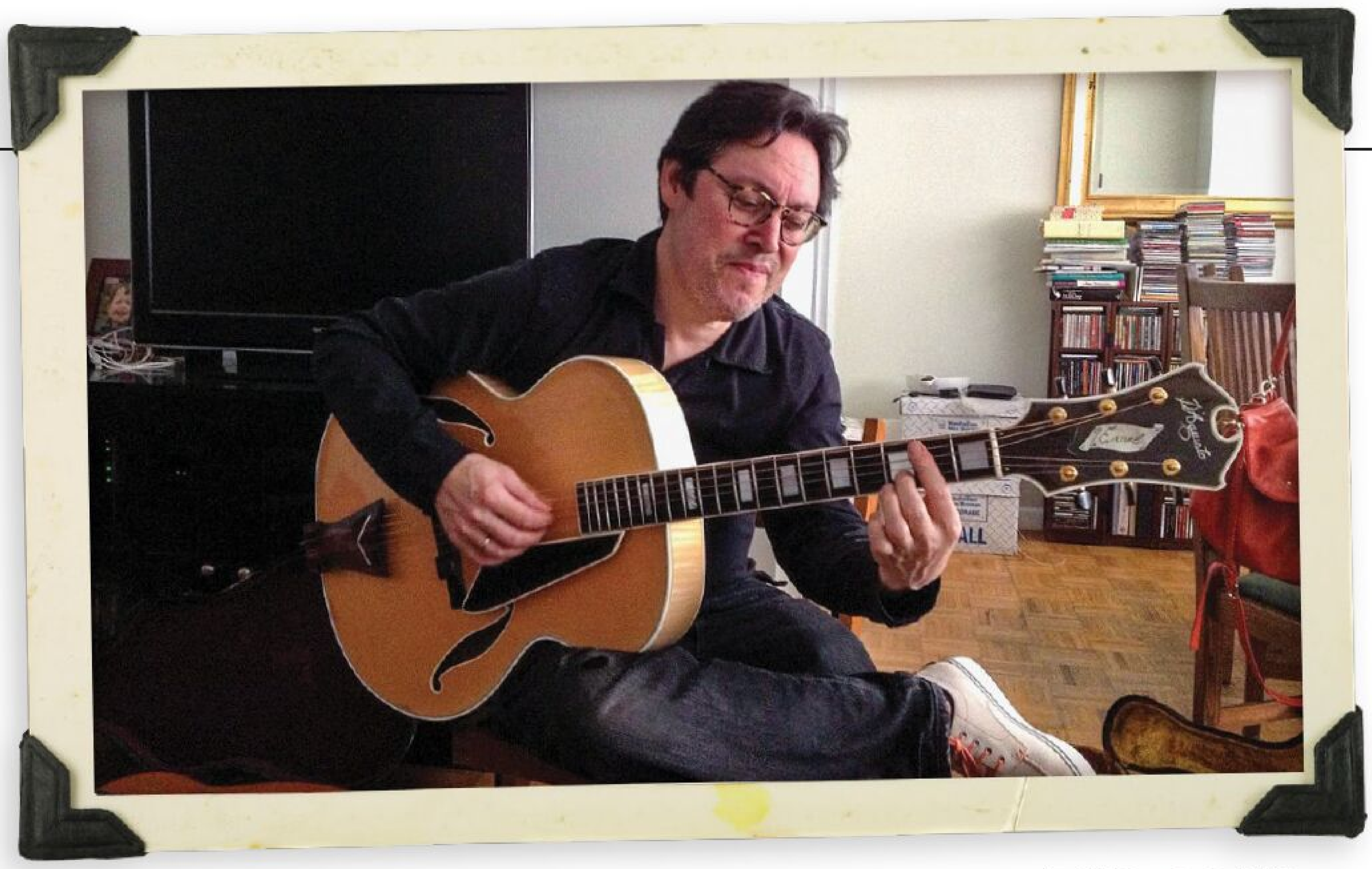
Price Guide

By Alan Greenwood & Ram W. Tuli

1959 Hofner 500/1

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	HIGH
1970s	Acoustic 404 Cabinet	6x10, Jaco Pastorius assoc.	$400	$575
1970	Ampeg SVT Bass Cabinets	2 cabs	$1,650	$2,350
1981	Austin Hatchet Hatchet	Travel bass	$700	$1,200
1900	Bohmann 14 ¾" Flat-Top	Other woods	$650	$850
2000s	Bourgeois Vintage D	Brazilian rosewood	$5,625	$7,500
2000s	Carvin Solidbody Carved Top (Higher-End)	Various models	$1,000	$2,000
1969	Danelectro Dane A Series	V, 2 pickups, vibrato	$1,500	$2,000
2000s	Death By Audio Supersonic Fuzz Gun		$125	$225
1996	DOD Bass Grunge FX92		$120	$300
1982	Electra X145 60th Anniversary		$400	$550
2021	Emmons Lashley LeGrande III Steel	25th Anniver., double neck	$3,250	$4,250
1944	Epiphone FT 45		$1,625	$2,125
1966	Epiphone Riviera	Sprarkling Burgundy	$5,000	$6,500
2012	Fender Bronco 40 Bass	40 watts, 1x8, 24 effects	$150	$200
1967	Fender Esquire	Blond, smuggler cavity	$12,500	$17,000
1999	Fender Jaco Pastorius Jazz	Fretless	$2,750	$4,200
2007	Fender '68 Heavy Relic Stratocaster	CS Dealer Select	$3,000	$4,000
2015	Fender Jimi Hendrix Stratocaster		$600	$800
1980	Fender Precision Special (USA)	Rare color	$2,200	$3,100
1992	Fender Set-Neck Stratocaster	Custom Shop	$3,000	$4,000
1970	Fender Telecaster	Common Color, poly	$10,000	$13,000
1996	Fender The Ventures Limited Edition Jazzmaster		$1,500	$2,000
1998	G&L Comanche (Reintroduced)	Standard finish	$1,125	$1,500
1993	Gibson Chet Atkins SST Celebrity	200 made	$2,250	$3,000
1942	Gibson EH-100	1x10, 4/6 tubes	$750	$1,100
1962	Gibson ES-345 TD/TDSV	Stud tail, PAF	$23,000	$30,000
2018	Gibson Firebird QWCustom Acoustic		$3,000	$4,000
2003	Gibson J-200 Western Classic Pre-War 200	Brazilian	$10,000	$13,000
1984	Gibson Les Paul (All Maple)		$2,750	$3,750
1991	Gibson '56 Les Paul Goldtop		$3,000	$4,000
2008	Gibson Les Paul Studio Premium Plus		$1,750	$2,250
1965	Gibson SG Special	White	$5,750	$7,500
2016	Gibson SJ-200 Sea Green Limited Edition	40 offered, CS	$4,500	$5,500



Featured Survey Participant
Larry Wexer with a 1991 D'Aquisto Excel. One of only two non-cutaway Excels made.

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	EXC. COND. HIGH
1959	Gretsch Country Club	Sunburst	$5,500	$7,000
2009	Grosh ElectraJet Custom	Jag-stang body	$1,500	$2,000
1994	Guild DCE True American	DCE-5	$800	$1,000
2014	Guild Standard (STD) Series		$1,250	$1,625
1981	Gurian S2B3H	Brazilian rw	$3,750	$4,750
1985	Heritage H-140/H-140 CM	Black	$1,250	$1,625
1959	Hofner 500/1 Bass	Right- or left-handed	$7,000	$9,000
1988	Ibanez JEM777 Series	Various models	$5,000	$8,000
1983	Ibanez Multi-Effect UE305		$200	$300
1940s	Kalamazoo Lap Steel	red and brown	$450	$600
1998	Kendrick Powerglide Attenuator		$200	$250
1967	La Baye Model 2x4 II		$2,000	$3,000
1980s	Lowden Flat-Top	Premium models	$4,500	$11,000
2006	Marshall MB30C		$125	$175
1978	Marshall Model 2040 Artist 50-Watt Combo	2x12	$1,700	$2,250
1934	Martin 00-17H		$6,000	$7,750
2008	Martin America's Guitar 175th Anniversary		$5,000	$6,500
1983	Martin D-18	150th Ann. 1833-1983	$2,500	$3,250
1998	Martin DC-15E		$775	$1,000
1989	Martin HD-28GM	Grand Marquis	$3,500	$4,500
1996	Martin SP000-16T		$1,250	$1,625
2014	Mesa-Boogie Big Block 750		$1,300	$2,000
1983	Peavey Encore 65	Tube combo amp	$225	$350
1975	Ovation Viper 1271		$825	$1,125
2014	Peavey Vypyr Series	15 watts, combo	$65	$100
1988	PRS Custom (Custom 24/PRS Custom)		$4,500	$6,000
1940s	Rickenbacker Electro Lap Steel	Headstock logo	$700	$950
1970	Rickenbacker Model 365		$5,000	$6,500
1970s	Ross 10 Band Graphic Equalizer		$50	$120
1979	Steinberger H2	Black	$3,000	$4,500
1937	Stromberg Master 400	2 braces, Sunburst	$10,000	$13,000
1962	Supro Kingston		$1,125	$1,500
2006	Taylor 314		$1,250	$1,625
1985	Taylor 910	Maple	$2,750	$3,500
1999	Taylor XXV 25th Anniversary	XXV-DR, XXV-GA	$2,000	$2,500
1940s	Vega Profundo Flat-Top	Rosewood	$2,500	$3,250
2004	Vox AD50VT		$155	$200
1965	Vox Wildcat	Extended range pickup	$550	$750
1983	Yamaha G100-212		$200	$275
2009	ZVex Effects Mastrotron		$70	$95

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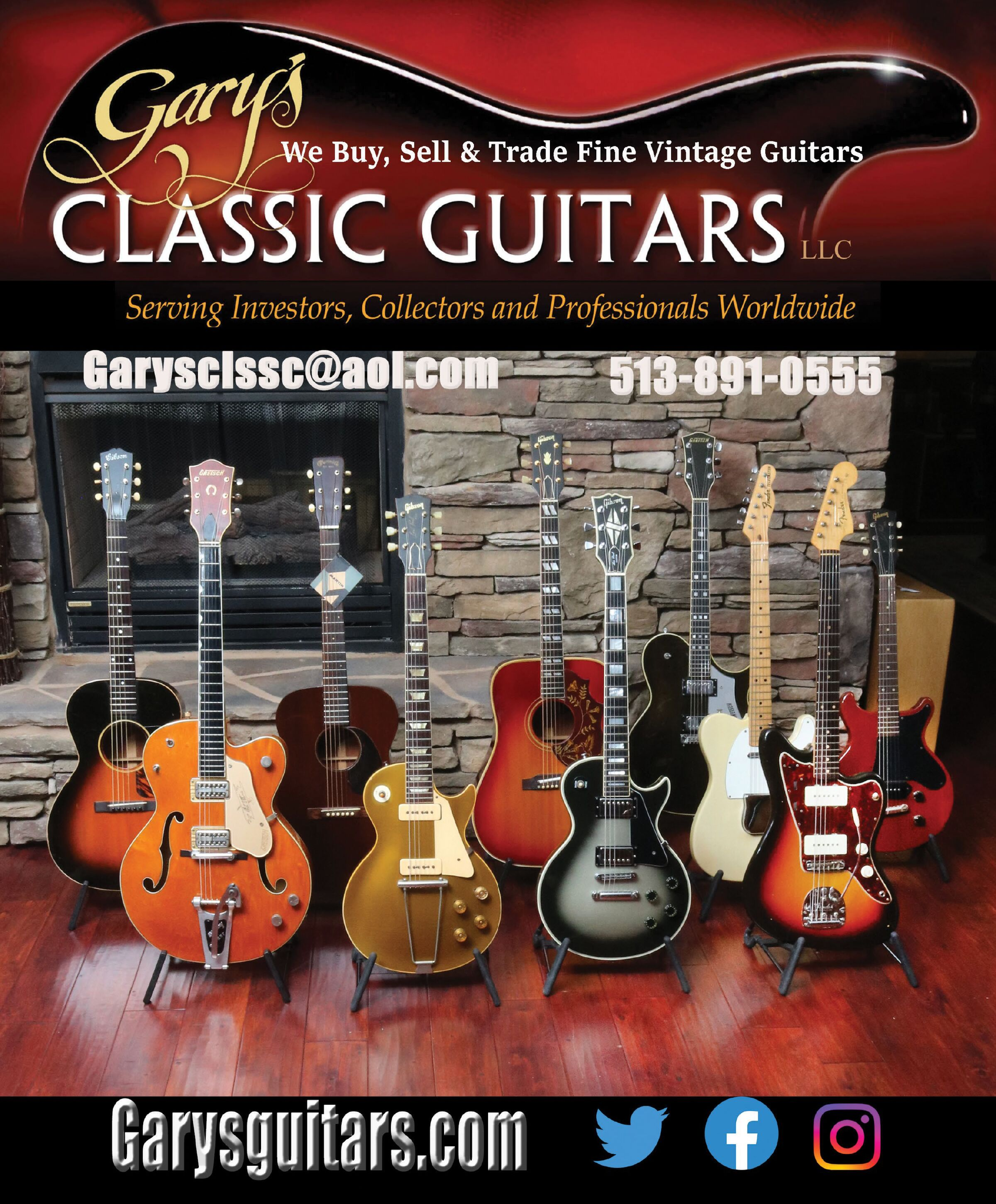
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The Black Crowes' Chris Robinson and bassist Johnny Colt onstage in 1991.

HARD TO HANDLE

The Black Crowes' *Shake Your Money Maker*

By Pete Prown

At the dawn of the '90s, rock and roll was not in a good place. MTV had spurred a craze of dance videos and arena-rock acts, while shredders and hair-metalists dominated guitar magazines. Out of nowhere, a five-piece band from Georgia emerged, pumping out three-chord stompers like "Jealous Again," "Twice as Hard," and a take on Otis Redding's "Hard to Handle."

With *Shake Your Money Maker*, the Black Crowes deftly resuscitated the airwaves, drawing comparisons to the Stones, Humble Pie, and the Faces. In short order, the five brash young musicians paved a way for rawer guitar sounds throughout the decade.

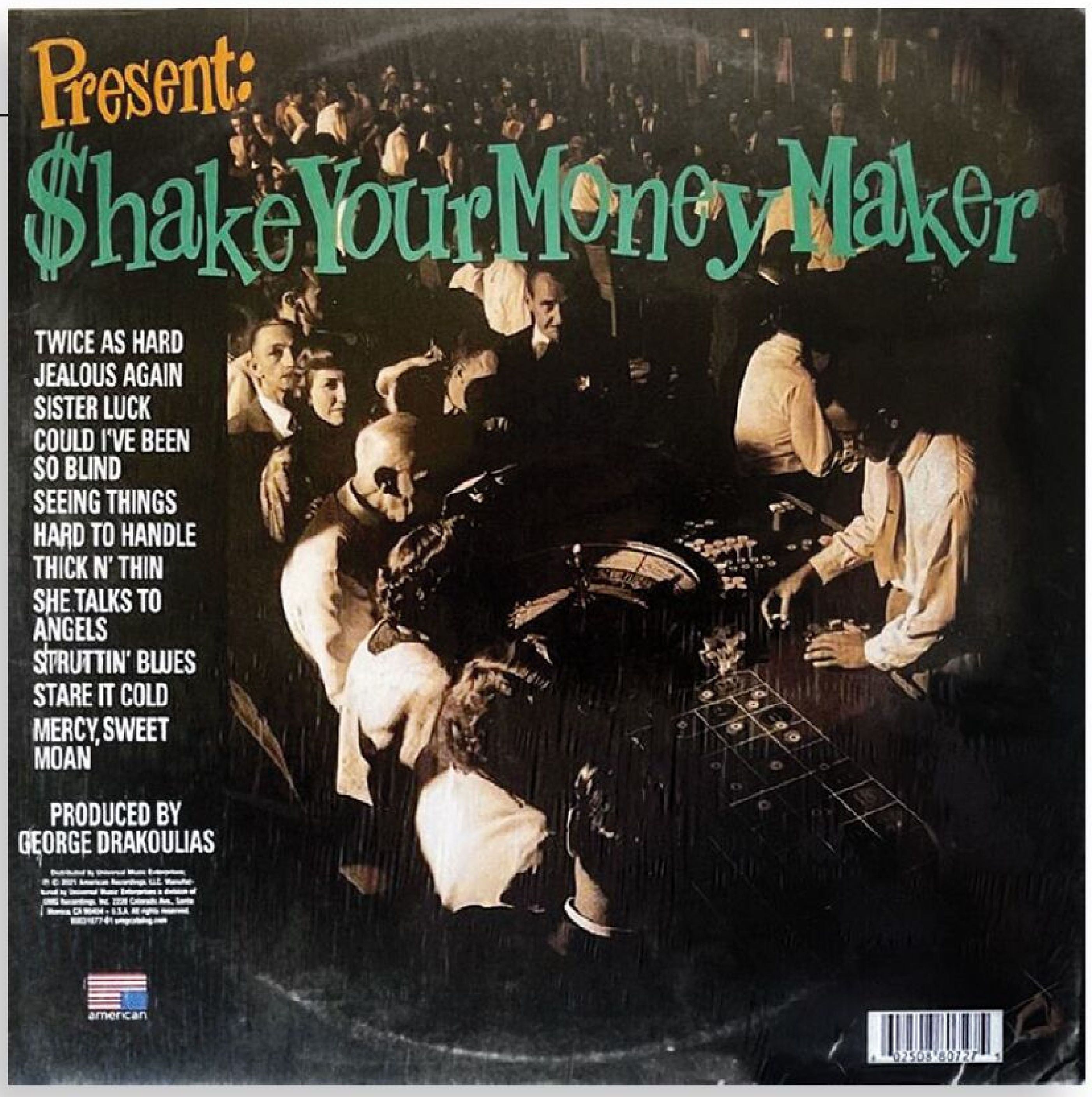
In a Philadelphia hotel suite during their fall 1990 tour (opening for Heart), guitarists Rich Robinson and Jeff Cease spoke about how the Crowes connected to their vintage roots.

"When I was learning to play, I was into whatever was *un*-hip at the time," said the 21-year-old Robinson. "I love Sly and the Family Stone, which was in my dad's record collection. My brother, Chris (Black Crowes' vocalist), and I grew up in a musical house where there was everything from Robert Johnson and Son House to Buffalo Springfield and the Who."

Sitting next to Robinson on the sofa, Cease zeroed-in on one of his favorite blues-rock masters.

"You have new guys who do fast solos on a record, but there's no song and nothing to remember the music by," he said. "I can't play fast, but I like the slow stuff; I use my pinky a bit, but mostly it's my ring finger. I call it the 'Kossoff finger' because that's the one Paul

Black Crowes 1991: Rudi Keuntje/Future-Image/Zuma.



Kossoff used for his great vibrato on Free albums.

"So many players think their solos are the main point of the song," he added. "To me, it's always been the song first, and that's why I've always dug players like Kossoff and Mick Taylor – guitarists who contribute to the song."

Of the *Money Maker* recording sessions, produced by George Drakoulias (Tom Petty, Susan Tedeschi, The Dirty Knobs) and recorded at studios in Atlanta and Los Angeles, Robinson recalled, "The drums and guitar were mostly cut live, and then we overdubbed guitar solos and vocals. We had a huge room and mics all over the amps, which we had cranked. I don't have a specific setting; I just diddle with the amps 'til I get the right sound. It's hard to explain what my tone is; it's not metal and it's not clean – it's just *my* tone."

Cease – who was fired from the Crowes in '91 and is now a member of country singer Eric Church's band – added, "When I started playing with Rich, it was immediately clear that we were playing for a common purpose. The *music* is the important thing, and guitar is only the tool. I played most of the solos on *Shake Your Money Maker*, and my leads were cut as spontaneously as possible. The wah at the end of 'Struttin' Blues' took a while because at first I did a fast thing, but didn't like it. Then our engineer whipped out a wah, which I had never used before, and the whole lead fell into place. Live, we trade a bit because you get tired of playing the same part every night for seven months."

"I don't really know how to play in standard tuning anymore; I use open E or G with a capo," Robinson said, analyzing his own style. "Jeff does 'She Talks to Angels' in open E for slide, but basically I'm in open tunings and he's not. I can't solo, either; I make up my guitar parts according to what's pleasing to my ear. We try to play different parts on rhythm to make things more colorful. You could play the exact same thing, like the Young brothers in AC/DC, but that's not what we do. The Stones' two different guitarists have always meshed to make different notes for bigger chords. We've always tried to do this."

For *Money Maker*, Robinson used a '68 Telecaster, '68 Les Paul goldtop with a Bigsby vibrato, a Gretsch Roc Jet, and the engineer's single-cut Schecter, of which he said. "I didn't like it, but it stayed in tune better than my guitars." Cease used the same goldtop for much of the album, while deploying a black Les Paul Standard for live work. Session amps included two Marshall 100-watt heads, a Bedrock head, two Marshall cabs, and various Fender Twins and Showmans. On the tour, they used a few Marshall stacks apiece, with no pedals.

Within that hotel suite 33 years ago and still trying to process the Black Crowes' sudden fame, a young Rich Robinson found irony in how the press portrayed them. "When we first came out, the rock press called us a 'Southern-rock band' like Skynyrd or the Georgia Satellites, which is ridiculous. I understand people need to find common ground with a new band. Other people said we're like the Stones because we're a five-piece, but so are Aerosmith and Guns 'N Roses. And we use open-G tuning like Keith Richards, but Keith didn't invent it. I'm not saying we're doing it all by ourselves, but to me, acts like the Black Crowes, London Quireboys, and Lenny Kravitz are opening up a new kind of rock and roll."

Fast-forward to 2023; after years of feuding, Rich and Chris Robinson reassembled the Crowes with a fresh lineup, cutting the EP *1972* and recently releasing an in-concert album, *Shake Your Money Maker Live*. Cease, meanwhile, is still busy touring and recording with Eric Church. **VG**

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RANDY RHOADS

Transcendent Tribute

By Wolf Marshall

September 20, 1980, marked the release of Ozzy Osbourne's debut solo album *Blizzard of Ozz*, a hard-rock recording that introduced Randy Rhoads to the world. In the 43 years since, Rhoads' credentials have become inarguable, his sphere of influence powerful.

John Michael "Ozzy" Osbourne was, with his Birmingham cohorts in Black Sabbath, an early architect of British heavy metal. Reaching beyond the light/dark implications of Led Zeppelin's blues-tinged metal and the progressive/classical/metal fusion of Deep Purple, Sabbath cultivated occult themes, exotic sounds, and dungeons-and-dragons imagery beginning with its eponymous 1970 debut album. The "diabolus in musica" factor was evident from its spooky opening notes, and appropriately, Ozzy adopted the name "Prince of Darkness."

Sabbath enjoyed a decade of prominence with a string of influential records until Osbourne's excesses forced the band to replace him in 1979. Though he'd previously entertained the notion of a solo band (tentatively titled Blizzard of Ozz), after his unceremonious dismissal, Ozzy considered reveling in prolonged substance abuse before returning to the government dole. Instead, he was signed by Don Arden (Sabbath's manager) to Jet Records, started collaborating with bassist Bob Daisley, and proceeded to form a new group.

Meanwhile in Los Angeles, a new breed of guitarslinger was captivating a burgeoning hard-rock audience. Rhoads and Eddie Van Halen defined the movement with elevated technique, daring sounds, and unique songwriting. Both plied their wares on the Hollywood club circuit; Ed with Van Halen, Randy in Quiet Riot. The explosion heard on *Van Halen* in '78 officially ushered in a new era, and the city became a fountainhead of metal guitar. Under the management of Sharon Arden (Don's daughter), Osbourne moved to L.A. to work with Gary Moore, then assemble his own band. Bassist Dana Strum, cognoscente of the L.A. scene, arranged an audition for Rhoads, who was disenchanted with Quiet Riot's personal problems. Hired in September of '79 while merely warming up with his Les Paul and practice amp, an inebriated Osbourne (cloistered in the control room) didn't meet him until the

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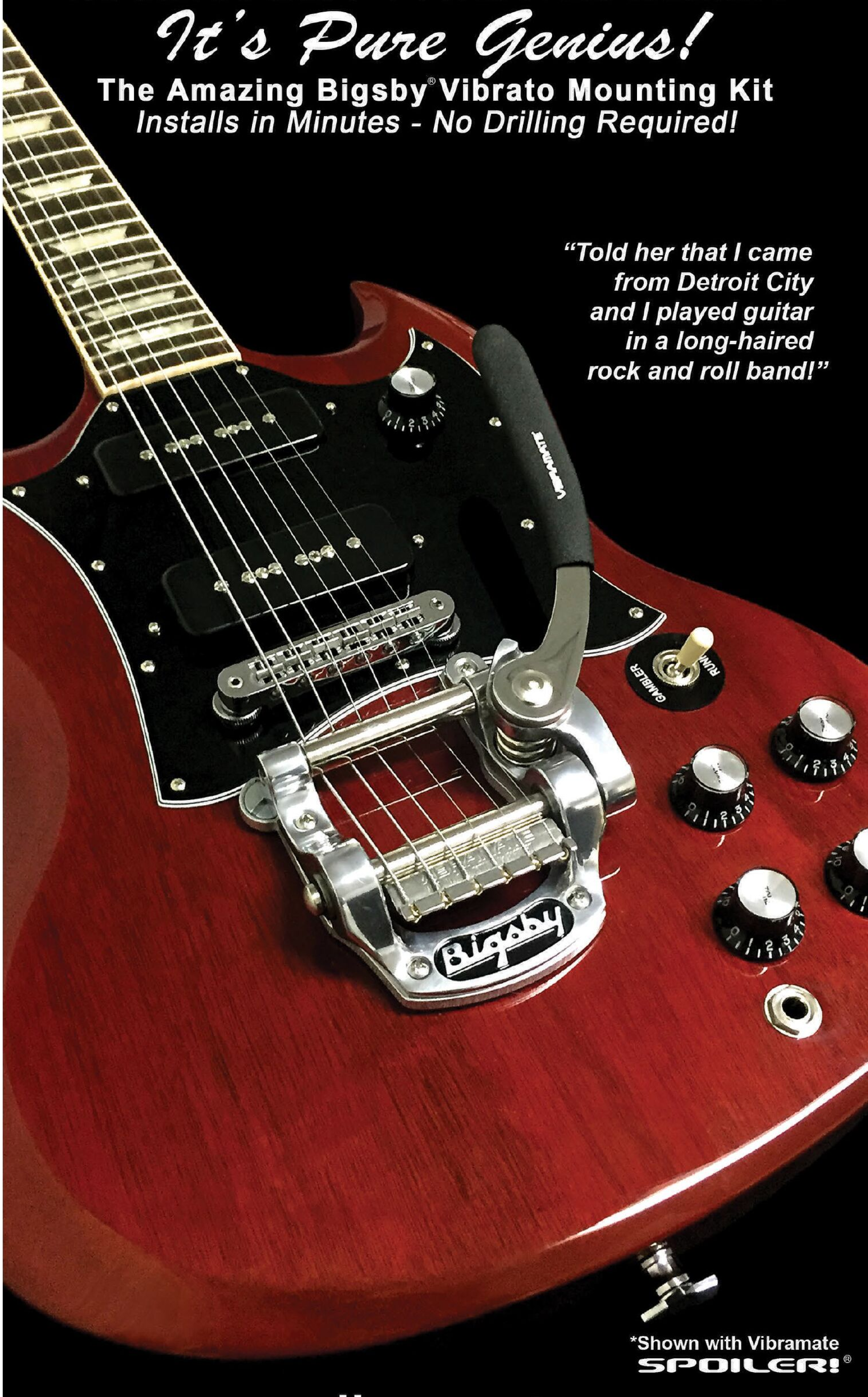

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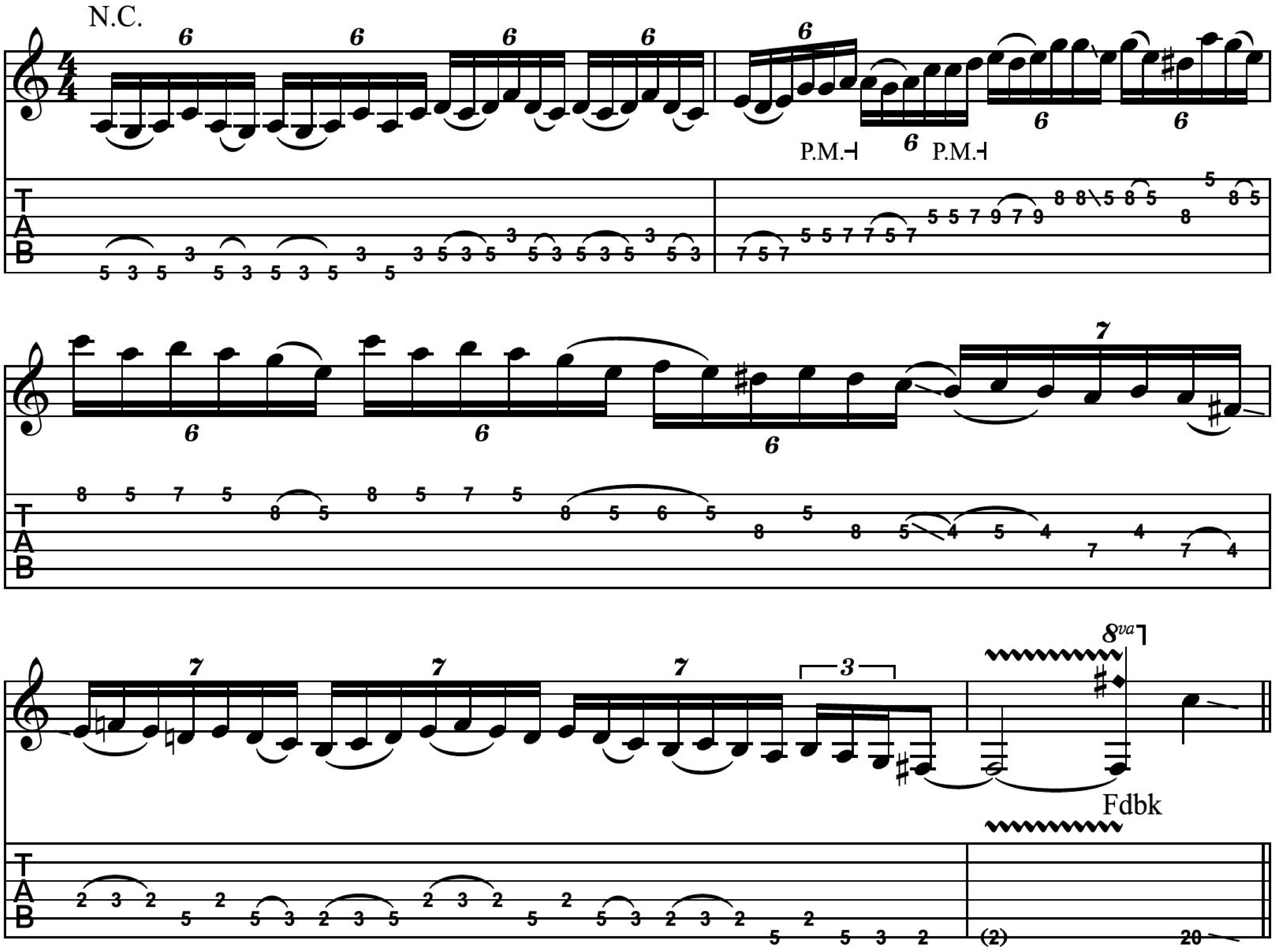

For many listeners, Rhoads' live solo spot was a revelation. Those who hadn't seen the Blizzard band only heard accounts from fellow fans about his showcase or possibly listened to a low-quality bootleg cassette. It was never committed to record – or even hinted at – on the Ozzy albums. Tribute corrected that. The lengthy cadenza, comparable to Van Halen's "Eruption," was an apex in concert. A treasure trove of Rhoads-isms, it affirmed his status as towering guitar hero from its first barrage of notes. This excerpt of his opening phrase (0:06-0:15) is a prime example of his technique and imagination. It begins with a series of pentatonic cells moved through an A minor tonal center in measures 1-2. He expounds on high-velocity blues-rock lines in 2-3 before completing his thoughts in Am (Aeolian mode) with scalar sequential runs in 3-4. Note his signature use of the operative F tone on beat 3; this was a staple of his style and added a neoclassic element to his blues-rock vernacular.

next day. Osbourne then returned to England, worked briefly with Daisley and an unnamed guitarist, then sent for Rhoads, who arrived in London on November 27. Ozzy, Rhoads, Daisley and Lee Kerslake (Uriah Heep) began assembling material at Ozzy's home; *Blizzard of Ozz* was recorded in six weeks in March and April, then released in September of '80. *Diary of a Madman* (October '81) was recorded a few months later, in only three weeks.

In the wake of those groundbreaking efforts, Rhoads received accolades from guitar magazines and compelled detractors in the press to rethink their opinions of heavy metal. However, the promise made on the first two albums was never fulfilled; Rhoads was just 25 when he died in a private-plane crash in Leesburg, Florida on March 19, 1982. Mid-tour, a grief-stricken Osbourne persevered with the *Blizzard* band, then recorded the live *Speak of the Devil* to satisfy his Jet contract with guitarist Brad Gillis, who afterward left to re-join his band, Night Ranger.

Osbourne again dipped into the L.A. well to recruit Jake E. Lee for *Bark at the Moon* ('83) and *The Ultimate Sin* ('86). After Lee's departure, he lifted a self-imposed moratorium and released *Tribute* in the spring of '87.

What had been missing in history's playlist was a definitive document of Rhoads' live performances with Ozzy. *Tribute* filled the void with more than a simple set of routine concert tracks. Originally a vinyl double album of 14 songs, it highlighted *Blizzard* staples ("I Don't Know," "Crazy Train," "Believer," "Mr. Crowley," "Flying High Again," "Revelation," "Steal Away", and "Suicide Solution") with the first eight tracks. The live renditions are fascinating and instructive when compared to their studio counterparts on the first two Ozzy albums. The next three tunes were Sabbath covers ("Iron Man," "Children of the Grave," and "Paranoid") likely intended for *Speak of the Devil* but held back. Jet's original plan to record a full program of Sabbath material in '82 as the band's third album was met with resistance from Rhoads and drummer Tommy Aldridge, who'd raised their artistic profiles and felt it was a step backward. Nonetheless, the songs were included. Again, it's enlightening to examine the updated reinterpretations of familiar Tony Iommi mannerisms through the prism of Randy's next-generation neoclassical style. Those 11 tracks were recorded at a May 11, 1981, concert in Cleveland while "Goodbye to Romance" and "No Bone Movies" are from an earlier gig, possibly the Southampton concert on October 2, 1980.

The album closes with studio outtakes of "Dee." Recorded in 1980 for *Blizzard*, the solo acoustic-guitar composition was written for Rhoads' mother, Delores. Enlivened with endearing false starts and self-effacing commentary, the two complete takes provide an intimate look at his procedure in preparing a basic track over which to overdub parts. They further remind us of his love of classical music and guitarists like John Williams, whom he praised, and how he was poised to leave the metal scene for a few years to earn a degree in the form at UCLA, his mother's alma mater. While on tour, he practiced fingerstyle diligently and regularly contacted local classical teachers in various cities for private lessons. His evolution from "Dee" (with its slight references to Bach's "Bourrée in E minor") to "Diary of a Madman" (its intro arpeggiation based on Leo Brouwer's "Etude No. 6") reveals his progress and growing interest in 20th-century modernism and dissonance as well as stereotypical baroque, renaissance, romantic, and classical borrow-

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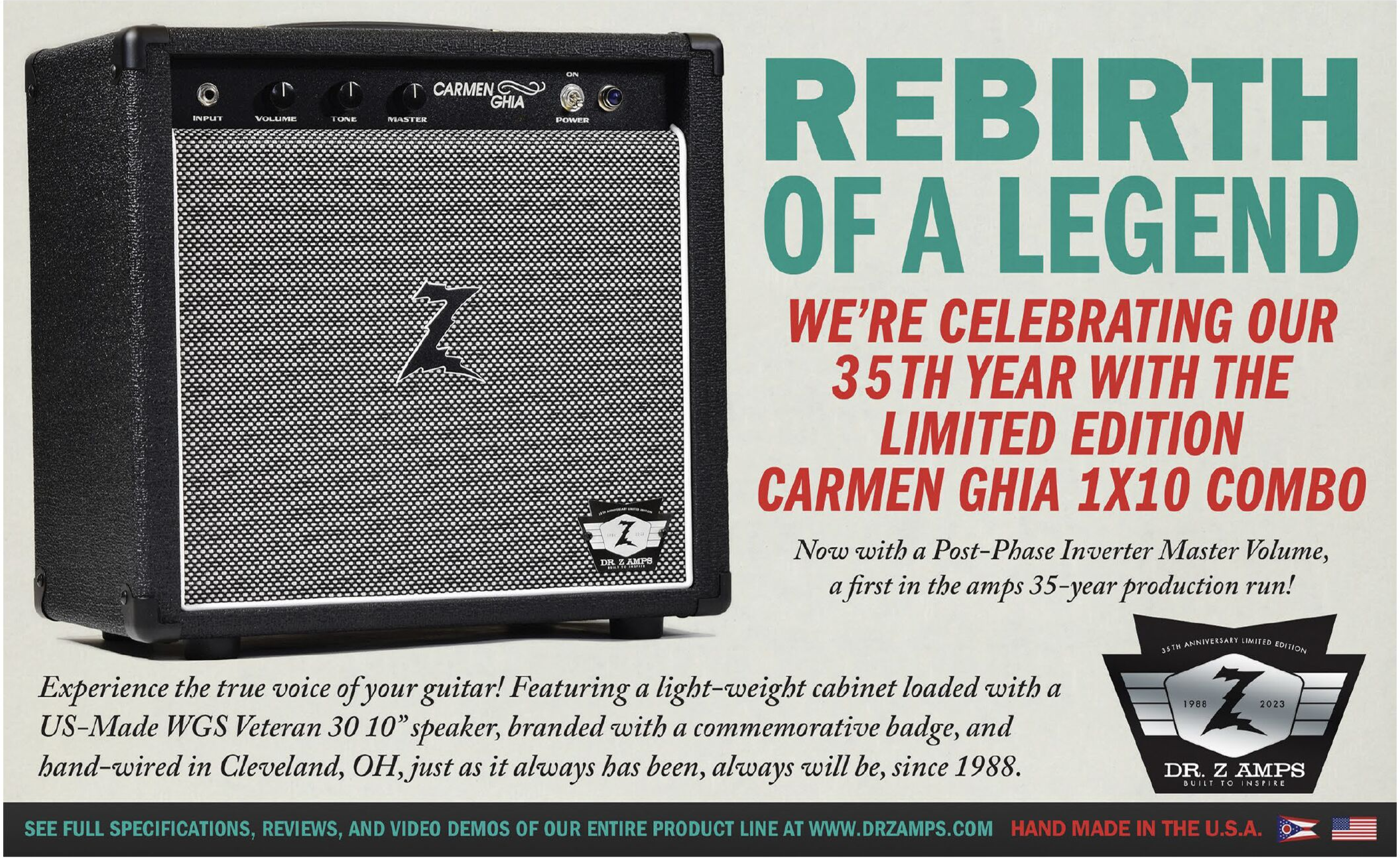
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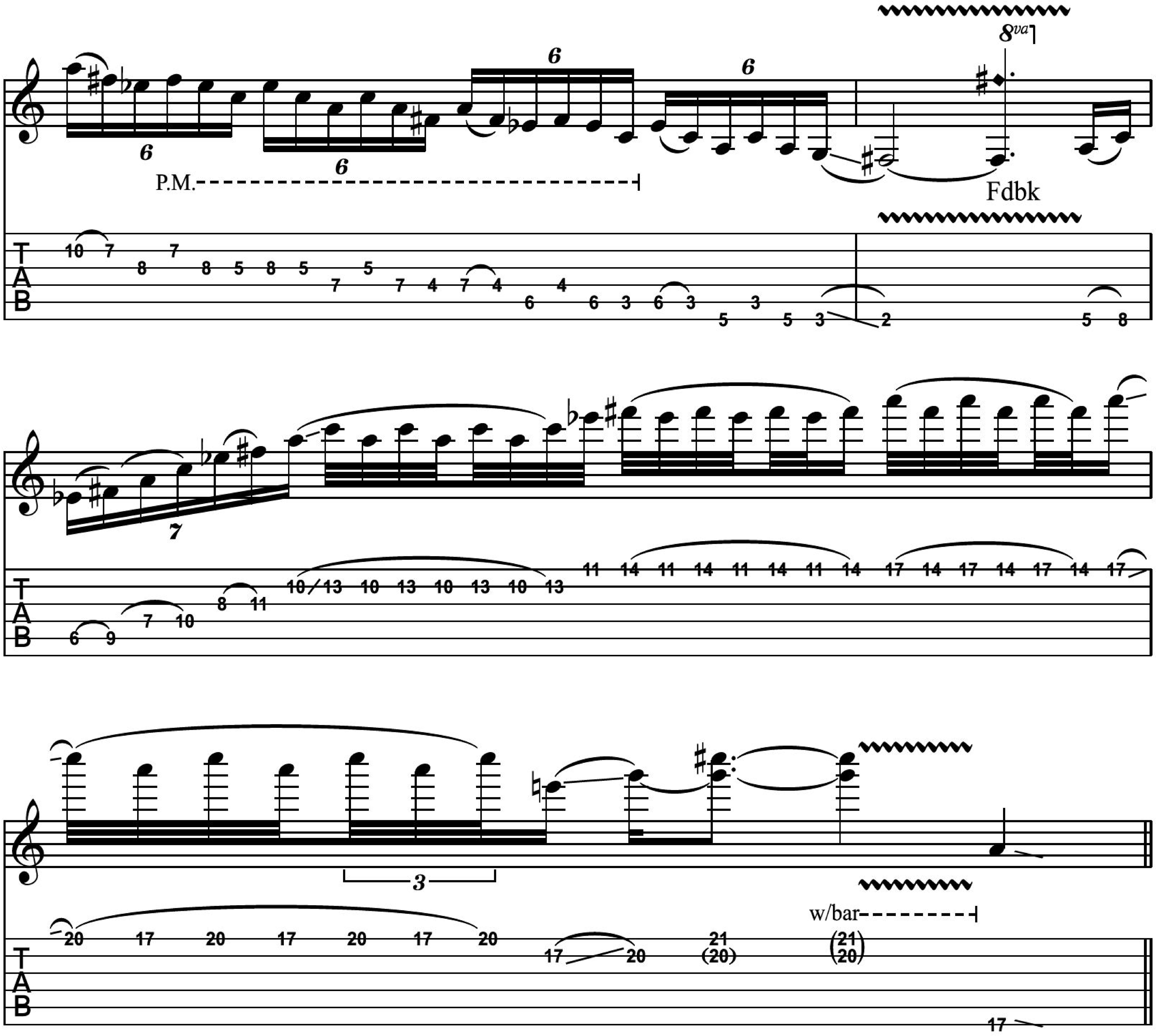
The "neoclassic" influence exerted by Rhoads caused a tsunami in rock. His sense of advanced harmony informed the Blizzard repertoire, resulting in songs with unprecedented chord progressions like "Revelation (Mother Earth)," "Mr. Crowley," "Diary of a Madman," "Flying High Again," "Believer," "S.A.T.O.," and "Over the Mountain" wherein various epochs of classical music seemed to converge and meld into metal. While he applied some of the same guitaristic devices as Van Halen, his environment was considerably different – which suited his use of dissonance, uncommon chromaticism, intervallic melody, diminished chords, diatonic modes, and harmonic-minor scales to underscore Ozzy's eerie, mystical subject matter. Flaunting his technique, he developed a unique guitar voice and presaged the neoclassic shred school of the '80s with lightning-fast scalar flurries straight out of the fusion camp and players like McLaughlin, DiMeola, and Holdsworth. Many of his florid runs and machine-gun ostinato riffs were alternate-picked and palm-muted in the DiMeola style, but thickened and made metallic with heavy distortion, while others were played in a flowing legato fashion.



Rhoads gained tremendous notoriety as a pioneer of neoclassical metal guitar. This antecedent phrase (0:41-0:50) highlights his use of the diminished chord sound endemic to classical music and often played in virtuoso violin passages, and echoed in the solos of many later practitioners. Check out his sequential arpeggio descent in measure 1 and use of heavy palm-muting to provide extra punch to the line. His answer in 3-4 is an ascending variation employing ornamented arpeggios which climb in minor thirds to emphasize the diminished sound. Note his cadence on an G-C# tritone dyad, which is given an aggressive vibrato shaking with the whammy bar.

Rhoads' virtuosity was crystallized and displayed prominently in his solo spot, which served as a face-melting showcase and instrumental interlude in "Suicide Solution" onstage. Despite his technical abilities and the potential for histrionics in metal stagecraft, his strategy reflected a classical mindset with fixed melodic and rhythmic elements that were only slightly reinterpreted themes, such as the second solo in "Mr. Crowley" with its specific arpeggio sequences. On *Tribute*, Rhoads' improvised fills were more plentiful and omnipresent. He seemed to cram every available sonic space with sustaining string bends, pinch harmonics, toggle-switch tremolo effects, pick slides and scrapes, long portamento slurs, pull-off flurries, trills, octave motifs, and whammy-bar manipulations.

Hardly a one-trick metallic pony, Rhoads could step effortlessly into the role of a grooving straightforward rocker – a given considering the influences of Leslie West, Michael Schenker, Ritchie Blackmore, Steve Lukather, Ronnie Montrose, and Jeff Beck in his background. In his reinterpretations of Sabbath's "Iron Man" and "Children of the Grave," he retained their original flavor while adding personal expansions and technical refinements; in "No Bone Movies" and "Paranoid," he was equally convincing in channeling blues-rock mannerisms – he even alluded to the almighty Chuck Berry influence in the latter. Though little video documentation was done during his short tenure with Osbourne, "Mr. Crowley," "I Don't Know," "Crazy Train" and "Suicide Solution" from the "After Hours" TV show in '81 remain invaluable remembrances of Rhoads' live persona and performance.

Rhoads' orchestrations, replete with thoughtful overdubs and multi-guitar layerings in studio arrangements, were significant aspects of his style. Reducing and recomposing these orchestrations for live settings would be daunting for most, but feel instinctive on *Tribute*. Check out the rhythm

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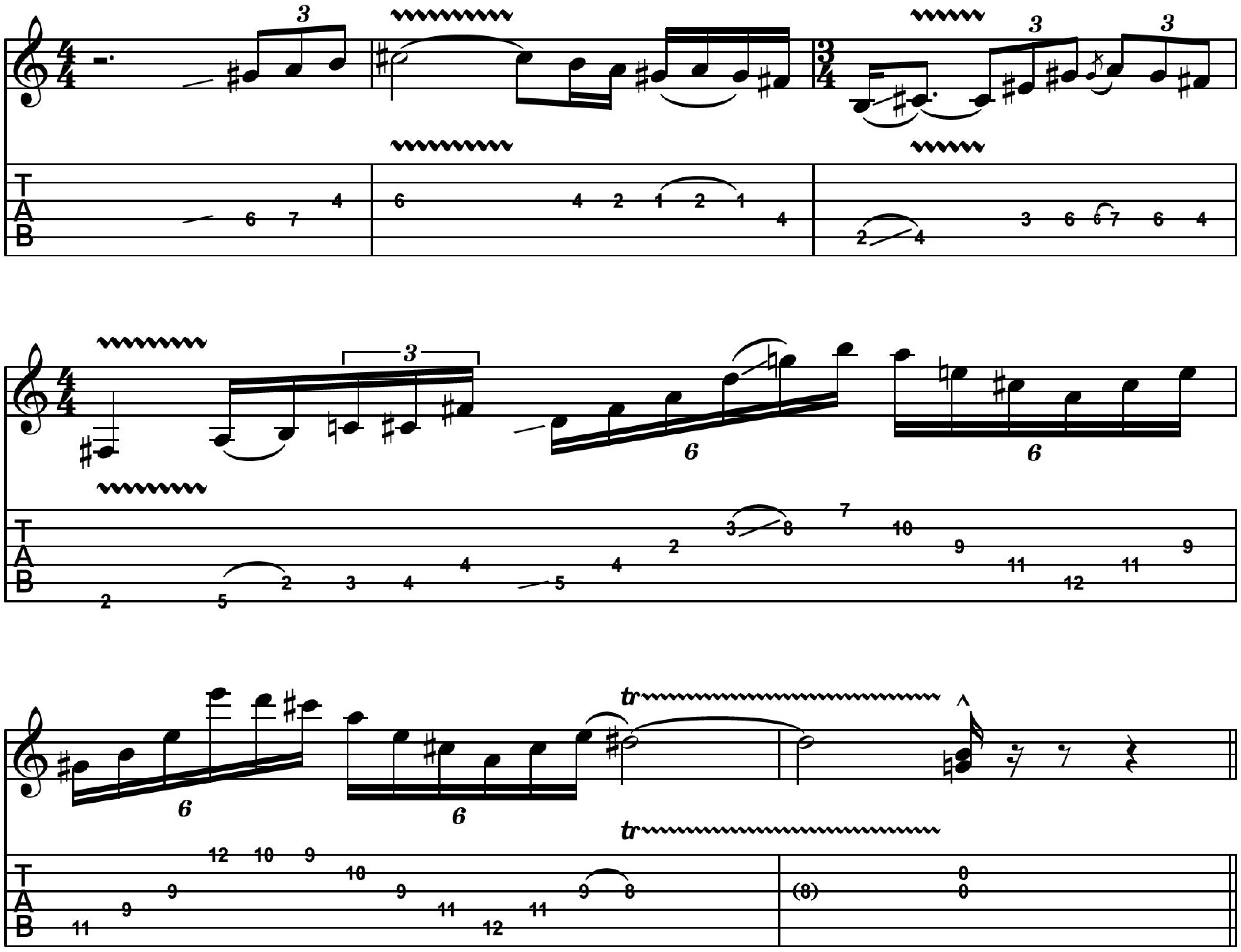
parts in the bridge of "I Don't Know," reharmonized verses in "Goodbye to Romance," or the combination of individual parts for the pre-chorus of "Flying High Again." Often, his arranging led to the types of reimagined chordal passages found in the bridge of "Revelation." Another example of his editing for live performance is found in "Steal Away," where he omits the final measures of the guitar solo line to play the stronger, more-identifiable rhythm riff with the group. In "Crazy Train," he elaborated on the song structure itself by adding two brief solos to the form which act as intro and outro.



The melody that follows (1:00-1:13) is one of Rhoads' most ear-catching moments in the solo. Here, he breaks free of pyrotechnics (what he called requisite "flash playing") to render a beautiful and singable theme that likely would've wound up on an Ozzy record. Note the fluid harmonic motion through various tonalities with modal lines and arpeggio figures. These move through the keys of F# minor (note the use of Harmonic Minor with an E# note implying C#7), D and A major (hitting secondary dominants along the way) much like classical compositions of Bach, Mozart, or Beethoven.

Rhoads relied on a Gibson Les Paul a decade before it was reintroduced to hard rock by Slash and his minions, and he was almost quaint with his '74 Alpine White Custom (with replaced pickguard and Schaller tuners) in the era of flamboyant superstrats and pointy metal guitars. However, the latter were foreshadowed by his Karl Sandoval Flying V-copy and asymmetric Jackson V prototype. The Sandoval sported a black-and-white polka-dot finish with bowtie inlays, mahogany body, Strat vibrato, DiMarzio PAF neck and Super Distortion bridge pickups, arrow headstock with six-in-line tuners, and modified '60s Danelectro neck. His first Jackson (also the *first* official Jackson guitar) was a white Concorde with black pinstripes, maple body, Charvel whammy bar, and block inlays. In December of '81, he received a black Rhoads signature model with a sleeker body, fixed bridge, through-body V tailpiece, and sharkfin inlays. Both had a neck-through construction, flatter 12"-16"-radius ebony fretboards, sharp Explorer-style headstocks (that became the trademark shape of Jackson guitars), 25.5" scale, Duncan SH-2N Jazz neck and SH-6B (later TB-4) Distortion bridge pickups. All four were seen in Ozzy concerts. Randy preferred small frets on his guitars and Gibson-style wiring on the Sandoval and Concorde, and used GHS .010 or .011 sets and Picato or Fender 351 white celluloid medium-gauge picks. On stage, he favored 100-watt Marshall stacks (with white and black Master and non-Master JMP 1959 Super Lead heads) feeding a wall of 4x12 1960 Marshall cabinets with Altec 417C speakers. Throughout live performances, he employed processing from his large pedalboard to add greater colorations to pieces, notably using the wah to produce filter sweeps in the final chorus of "I Don't Know" or modulation colorations for arpeggiated rhythm parts in "Revelation" and "Goodbye to Romance." His arsenal of effects included a Cry Baby wah and MXR Distortion+ fuzz plus various stompboxes – an MXR 10-band EQ set for midrange boost, Echoplex (to fatten the sound), MXR M117R Flanger, and MXR M134 Stereo Chorus. The chorus (used for modulation effects as well as to emulate his multi-tracked solos) sent a stereo signal to delay units housed in a rack case – a Korg or Roland RE-201 Space Echo tape units and a Yamaha or MXR analog delay. He controlled overall level with a Roland FV 2 volume pedal.

In 1981, Rhoads told *Guitar Player*, "Five years from now I'd love to have people know me as a guitar hero." He didn't live to see that moment, but *Tribute* has proved transcendent. Revered and recognized as an important record capturing the evolution of a musical form in ascendance at the hands of a master, it has rightfully taken its place alongside definitive live rock-guitar classics like *Live Cream*, *Band of Gypsys*, *Tokyo Tapes*, and *Strangers in the Night*.

Wolf Marshall is the founder and original Editor-In-Chief of *GuitarOne* magazine. A respected author and columnist, he has been influential in contemporary music education since the early 1980s. His new book, *Jazz Guitar Course: Mastering the Jazz Language*, will be released this winter. Others include *101 Must-Know Rock Licks*, *B.B. King: the Definitive Collection*, and *Best of Jazz Guitar*, and a list credits can be found at wolfmarshall.com.

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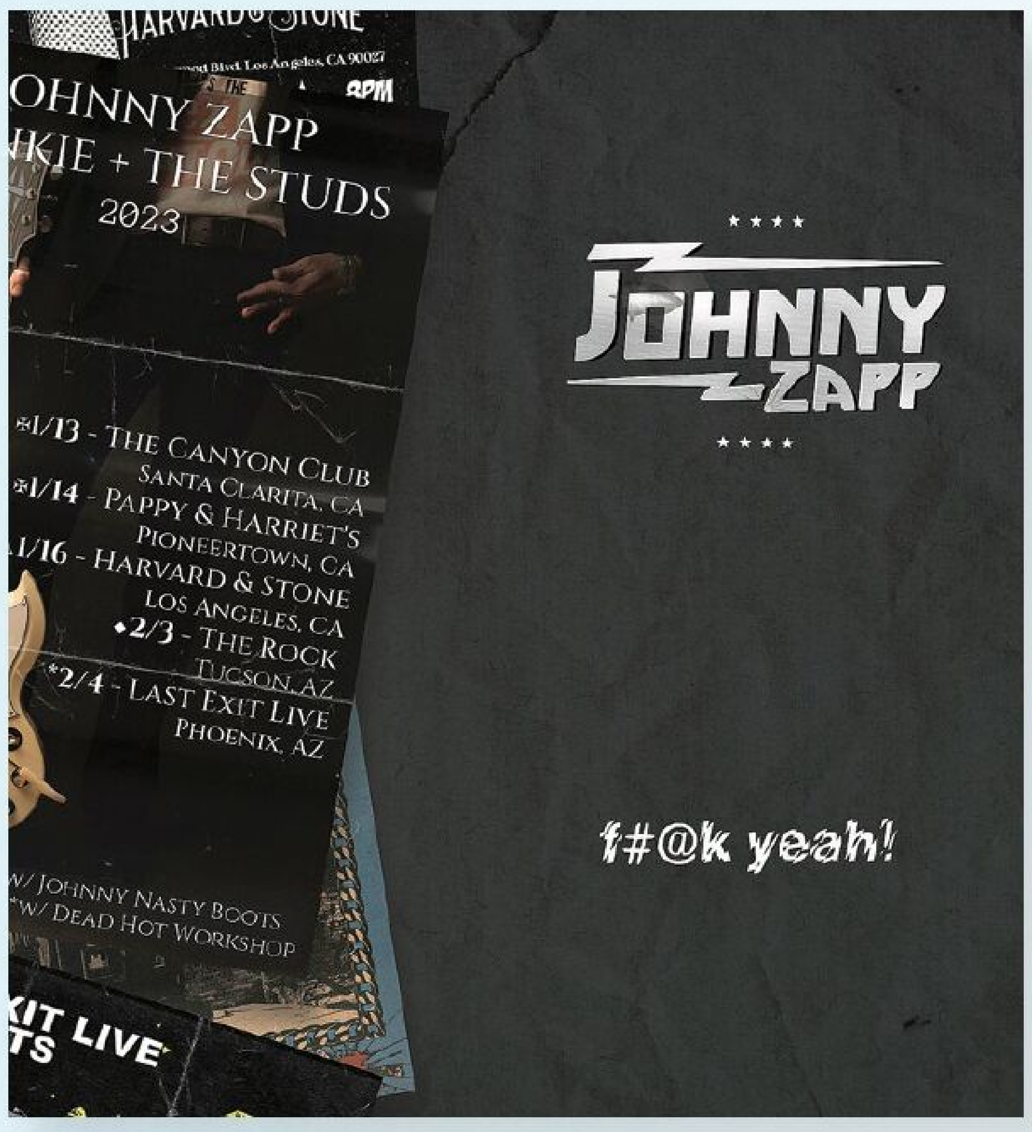

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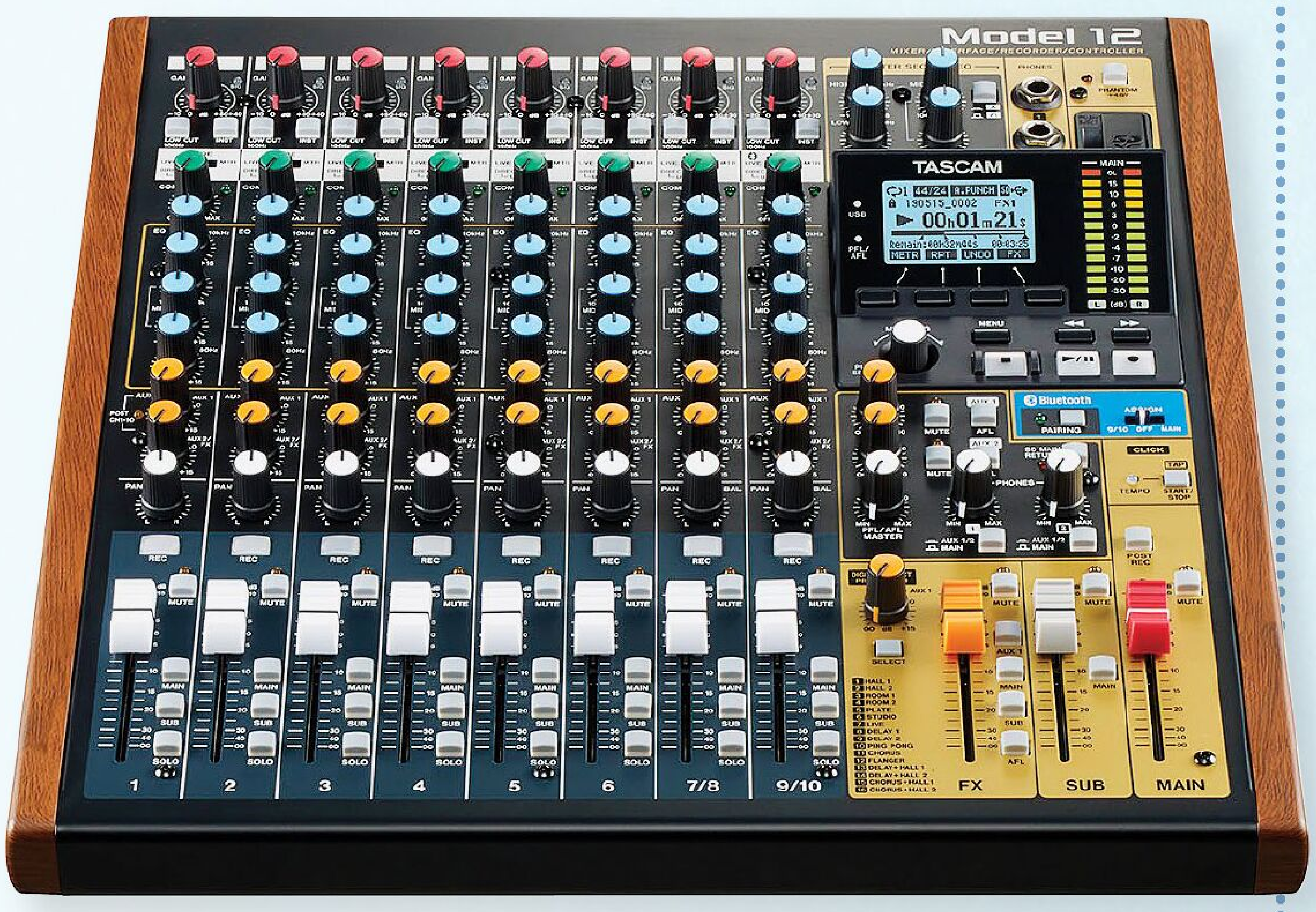

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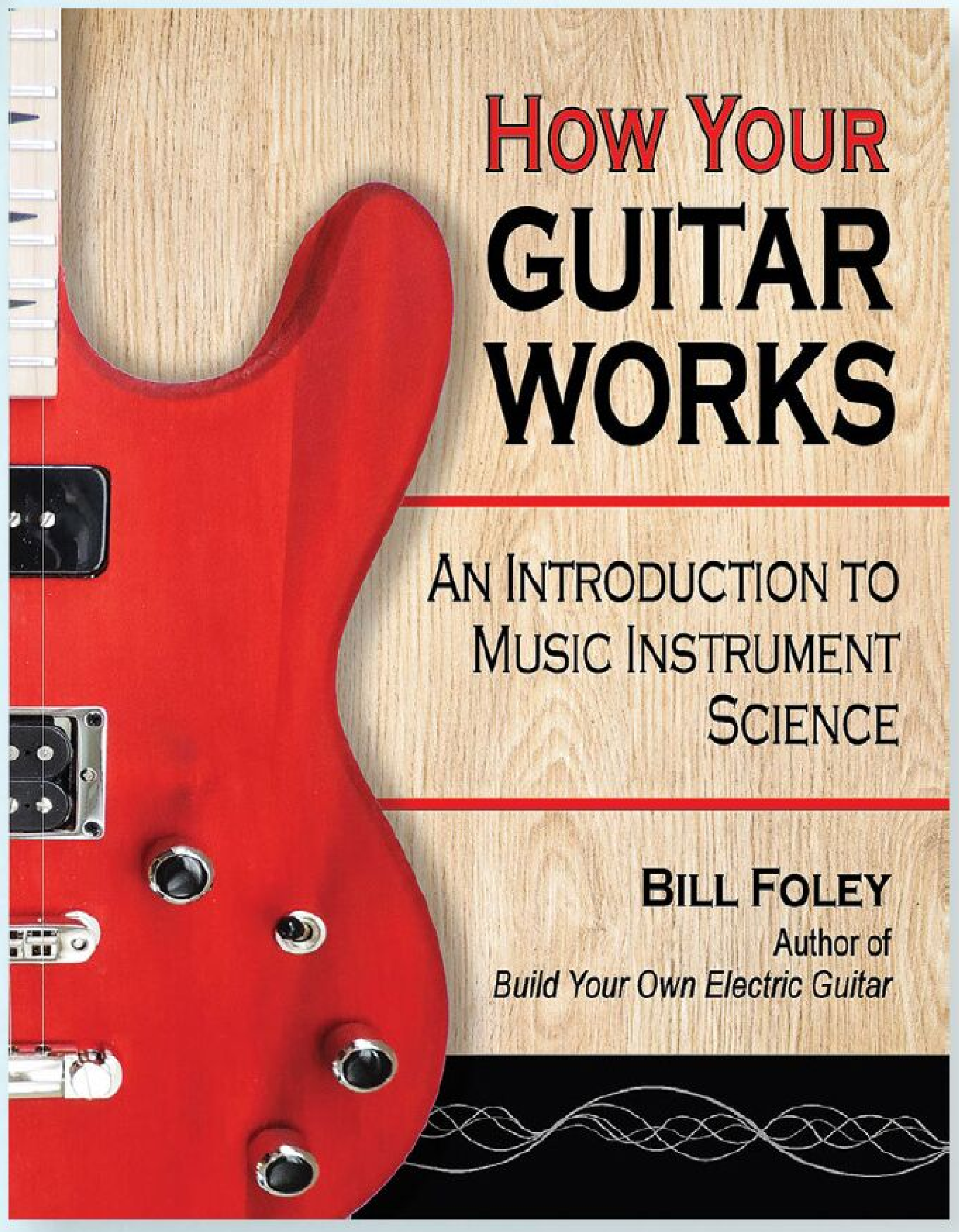

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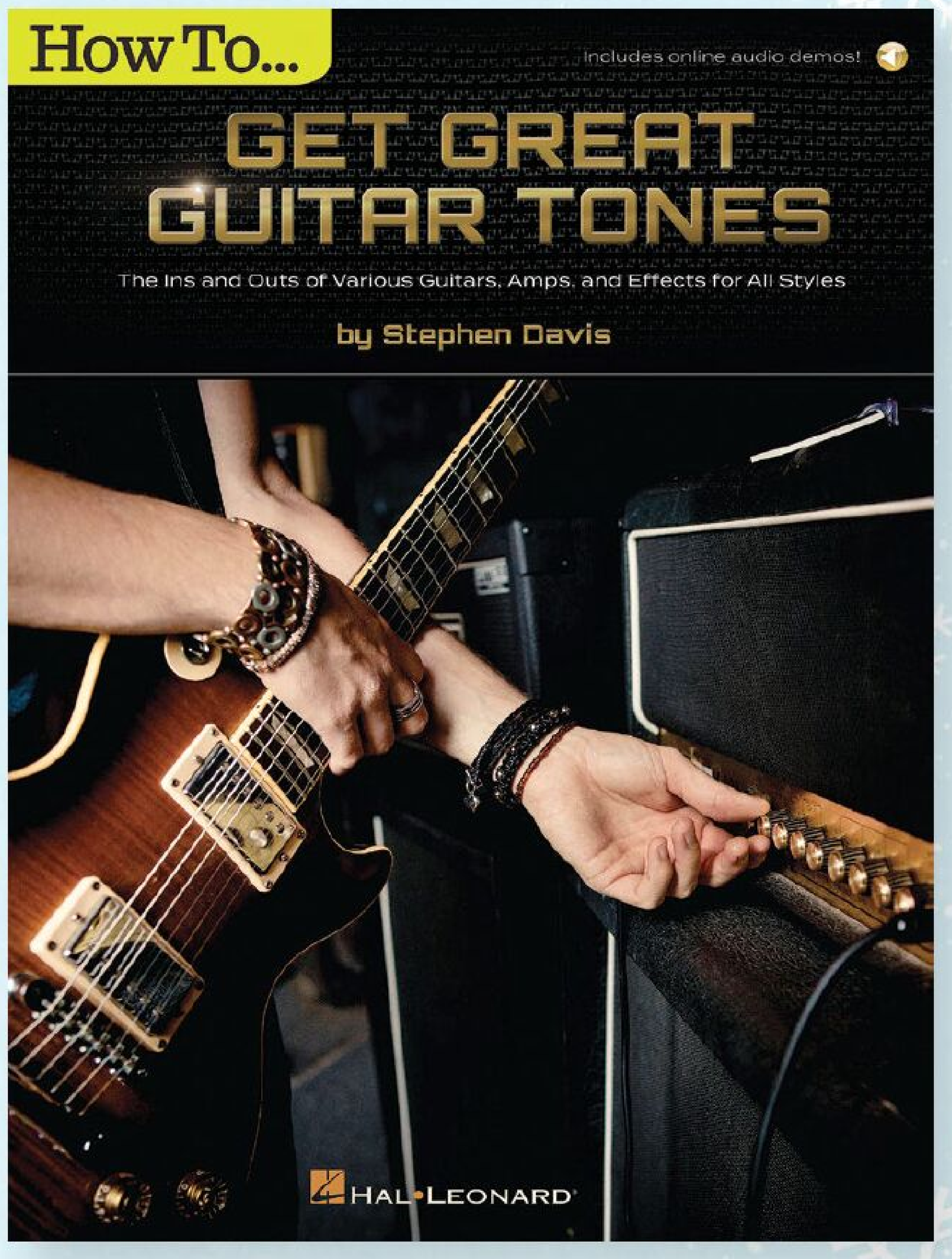

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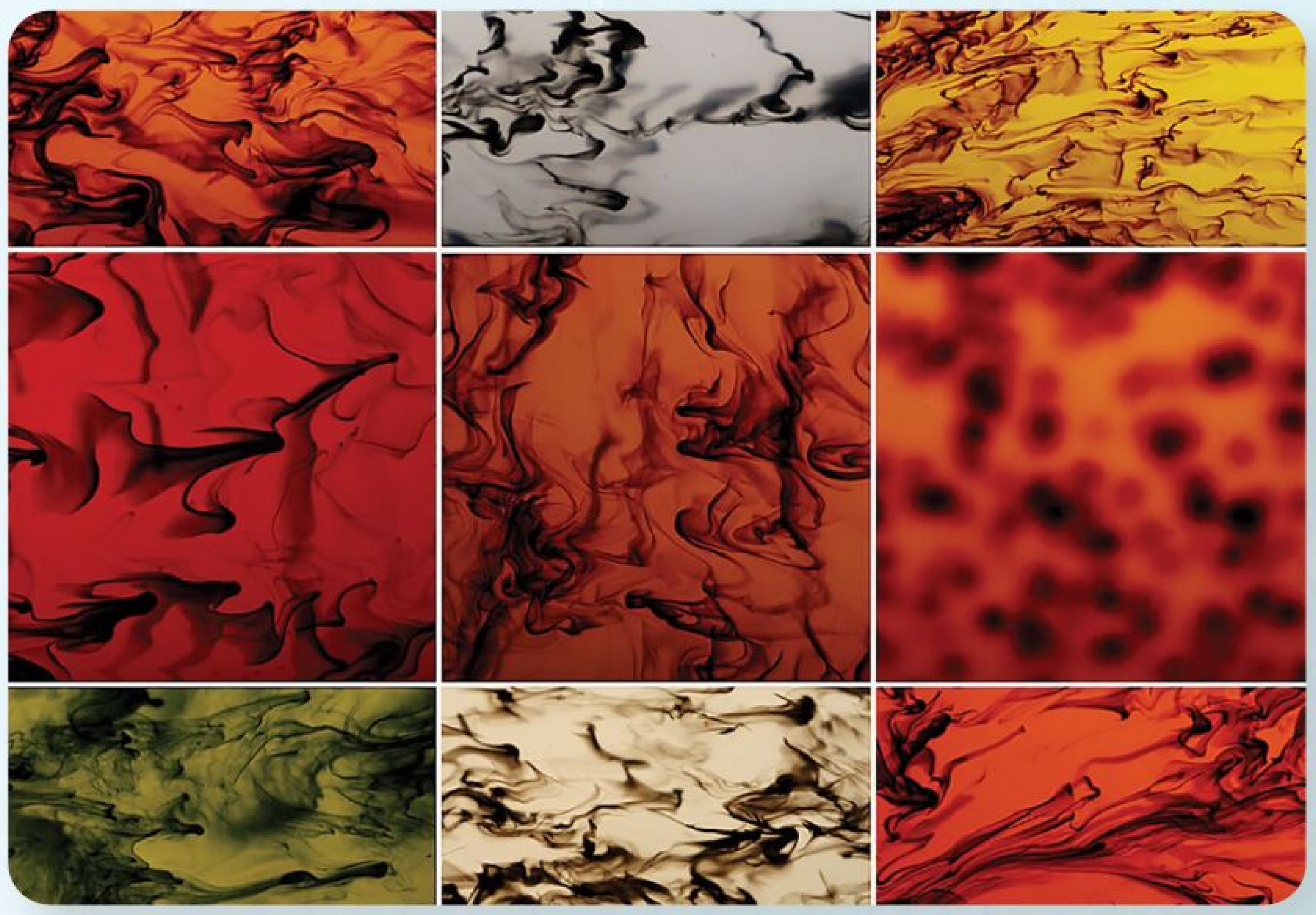

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Brian Setzer

WHAT A DUDE DOES

You can't keep an iconic rocker down. Brian Setzer's *The Devil Always Collects* is his first album in more than two years. Featuring the Grammy winner's trademark rockabilly fire, it's a smokin' set of tunes with a few surprises.

Guitar in-hand, the considerate, contemplative singer/songwriter/Gretsch aficionado spoke with *Vintage Guitar* about the album and his Rockabilly Riot! tour, occasionally launching into riffs and crooning lines.

Brian Setzer: Russ Harrington.

BY BRET ADAMS

***The Devil Always Collects* is your first release since 2021's *Gotta Have the Rumble*, and you haven't toured in four years. Explain the timing.**

Now I've got two records to play, don't I (laughs)? It was the whole Covid thing. That and I've got tinnitus. The doc said, "You can't be standing in front of a loud guitar amp." Luckily, it coincided. I would've beat myself up, just sitting around. In 40 years, I've never *not worked*! It really didn't take much of a bite out of me, so now I can go out and play *two* new albums, and throw in a little solo guitar. I've got four or five songs I'd like to play by myself.

Tinnitus never goes away, but is your condition better now?

It's a very strange thing. You're right, it never goes away, but I think your brain gets used to it. You can just deal with it better. It's like living with an ailment. People do it, and they're fine. I just had to take some time off, and I got used to it a little better, and I'm ready to go.

How do you decide what your next project is going to be, whether it's a solo album, a Brian Setzer Orchestra project, or a Stray Cats project?

"[The '57 Duo-Jet] just blew me away on this record. I mostly used that and put some tremolo on it. I went, 'There it is!' It added something different."

I think it dictates to me what it should be. I'll get an idea for a song, and it always starts with a guitar riff. Once I get two or three, it gets exciting. You know you've got something. Usually by then, it tells me, "What should this be? Does this lend itself to a big-band chart? Is it more of a Stray Cats-sounding thing?" With all the little guitar riffs I had collected, it turned into a Brian album. That works. The music tells *me* what to do.

Because it's you, you don't feel like you could force it into one of those boxes and make it into one of those projects? Is it obvious what it needs to be?

Yeah. There are certain songs I could definitely write a big-band chart to. There are some rockabilly songs I've written where I go, "That would sound great with a big band behind it." But at the end of the day, when you've got it all written, it's pretty obvious what it's supposed to be.

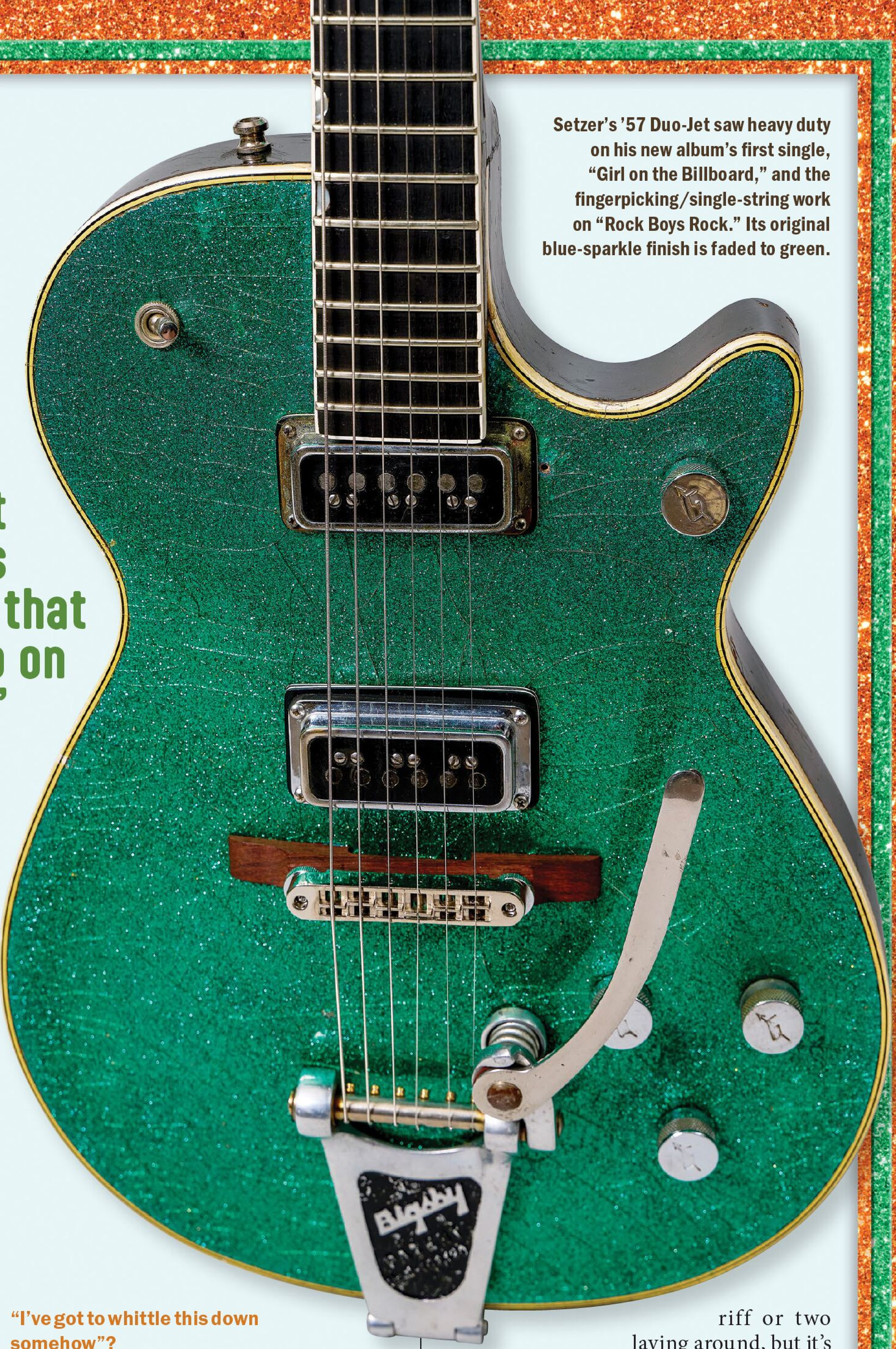
Do you consider yourself a prolific songwriter? Do you go into a project and say, "I've got to whittle this down somehow"?

Writing songs is a gift. It's like turning on a faucet. Once I get going, I've got to finish it. I'll be up all night because I've got a song in my head. I rarely write one or two songs and say, "Okay, I'll record these..." I usually get a focus of the whole album; I want it to be *this*. Once I turn on the faucet, it doesn't stop until all of the sudden I've said everything I've wanted to say.

Were most of the songs newly written since *Gotta Have the Rumble*?

It's all new. There might have been a riff or two laying around, but it's pretty much a brand-new record. For instance, on "What'll It Be Baby Doll?" I had come up with this great riff (plays) I thought was *so neat*! It's little pieces of magic like that you capture that inspire a song. Maybe I wrote that at 1 o'clock in the morning and put it on a tape recorder somewhere, but it was inspiring enough and got me to write an entire song around it. I fingerpick it, so it's got a unique sound that lends itself to the Gretsch and my style of playing.

For you, creativity is like a feeling – a



Setzer's '57 Duo-Jet saw heavy duty on his new album's first single, "Girl on the Billboard," and the fingerpicking/single-string work on "Rock Boys Rock." Its original blue-sparkle finish is faded to green.

"eureka" moment. You know when you've got it.

That's exactly right. It's the best drug in the world (laughs). You can't believe it. That's what keeps you coming back *for* it. You catch a little piece of magic. Sometimes I've got to check, "Did someone else write that?" It's *obvious* to me that it's a piece of music and I can't believe it hasn't been written already.

An example of that would be "Rock Boys Rock." With the main riff, I wrote that and went, "Oh God, that's good!" I wrote it on the guitar; (plays riff) I go, "That's catchy. What would it sound like if I sang over it?" All of the sudden you've got a little piece of magic. It keeps me coming back.

You do musical twists and turns on your records. On *Gotta Have the Rumble*, you played banjo on "Rockabilly Banjo," and on *The Devil Always Collects*, several songs include female backing vocals, including your wife, Julie Setzer, and Jennifer Goforth. Is that on purpose?

I'm glad you noticed that! Here's how that works. I'll get four or five songs deep and go, "Okay, I don't want to rewrite the first song. What would be a nice thing to hear right now?" That's when that happens. "I'm going to play a little banjo. But I'm not Earl Scruggs, so I'm going to play rockabilly banjo." Or, the idea came up on this record to write a song about a girl that's got a lot of soul. All of the sudden those Little Richard and James Brown tribute things start to happen, you get excited, and the song ("She's Got a Lotta... Soul!") comes out.

It's a conscious choice to do different things?

That's exactly right. There are a lot of ways you can jump. My base is rockabilly, but off of that you can jump anywhere – country, swing, jazz. That's more of a natural thing. It just happens.

Talk more about the album opener "Rock Boys Rock."

I'd written the song on the '59 6120, but wasn't getting the sound. It wasn't as hot as the song. I'd used the '57 Duo-Jet in the past, but when I turned it up, we thought, "This thing's a monster!" I had a big smile when I heard that solo back. It's got fingerpicking *and* single-string stuff. You don't hear guitar players do both together that often; a piece of advice I give is, "You've got to go past what you think you can do." You'll always be wondering, "Could I have gotten a better sound?" Turn it up too loud. Use another amp. You've got to exhaust all avenues. Sometimes you'll go back to the first idea, but you'll always be kicking yourself: "I wonder if I'd just used *that* guitar or just turned it up a *little* louder?"

"The Devil Always Collects" has a cool up-and-down riff, and the ladies on backing vocals in the chorus.

It's bitchin'. It's badass (laughs). I put some crazy harmonies on the solo. With the girls singing, it sounds like a '60s horror film (laughs).

Do you do a lot of guitar overdubs – doubling, harmonies, or rhythm and leads?

I want to be able to perform it live, so I don't do many overdubs. You can do too much in the way of overdubs, especially on rockabilly. It works against you sometimes. People always want things to sound *fat*. I like things to sound *thin*! By that I mean so you can hear all the instruments. I don't like a heavy, overdriven guitar – that's for playing block, three-note rock chords. But, when you're playing chords with any kind of complexity, they become mud.

The first single, "Girl on the Billboard," was a #1 hit on the *Billboard* country chart for Del Reeves in 1965. Why did you cover it?

My friend played it for me. It's a hoot. I love the original. I thought, "I've got to swamp this up a bit."

How about the '57 Duo-Jet?

It just blew me away on this record. I mostly used that and put some tremolo on it. I went, "There it is!" It added something different.

The riff has surf feel to it.

The surf feel is in my wheelhouse. I love the sound of those guitars. A lot of rockabilly players like that sound and tone, and it's not far from my sound. In the '60s, a lot of people started using it. I decided it sounded groovy in there.

"The Living Dead" has a laid-back, woozy atmosphere.

I needed a minor-key song. It fit the theme of the album, which was going into a darker rockabilly feel.

"What'll It Be Baby Doll?" has a bouncy '50s vibe.

I made up a guitar solo that had actual changes, so the boys were a little thrown on that. That's the 6120 with a little slap-back echo. It's an example where you don't want it to be too thick. You want to hear all the instruments.

"Black Leather Jacket" is heavier, modern-sounding rock.

I had the old leather jacket I wear when I'm riding motorcycles hanging there, and I'm thinking, "Man, I've had that thing for 30 years. It would be cool to write a song about it. Where it's been. It's been all over the world." I came up with that twin guitar riff, and you can almost hear a Southern-rock band. When I started, it sounded more Western, and when I finished, it sounded more rock. For me, that's a double-edged sword because the rockabilly crowd is not going to like that song. It's too hard for them. It's not "billy" enough. I just do what I do. I liked it. I cranked up the 6120, took off the echo, and the guitar just *sang*. At the end, I just *played*. I riffed out. I love that double guitar riff.

I can't sway to popular opinion or what I think people will like. One of the things about me, for better or worse, is that I've always

done what *I* wanted to do. It is what it is. To me, that sound belonged on the record.

"She's Got a Lotta ... Soul!" has R&B horns.

I put the horns on last. I was thinking of "Lucille" and a nod to Little Richard, then I came up with that melody. It's a catchy little thing and had a good groove. It fit, but was enough of a curveball that it made a difference.

"Play That Fast Thing (One More Time)" is a Rockpile cover.

I love Dave Edmunds. The album just needed that at that point. That's one where I tried a bunch of guitars a bunch of different ways, and the original clean sound was the best.

What did you end up playing?

I used the 6120 through a little amp – a Deluxe or something. I wanted to get a really clean sound.

"A Dude'll Do (What a Dude'll Do)" has clever lyrics and a great rhythm.

I'm glad you picked that one, because I love it. I thought that fingerpicking thing and single-string thing were very original. I'd never heard anybody do that. My friend, Mike Himelstein, sent me lyrics. Elton John once said, "When Bernie Taupin sends me lyrics, it becomes a song." It's like that with me and Mike. He sends me lyrics and I'm looking at them and the lyrics turn into musical notes! It happens that quick. I used my '56 Gretsch White Penguin. What a great tone this thing has!

Setzer's Gretsch Hot Rod signature guitars (far left and right) are based on the 6120 and dressed with oversized sound holes, TV Jones Setzer Signature Filter'Tron pickups, pinned Adjusto-Matic bridge, Delrin nut, and Gotoh locking tuners. They're parked next to his '57 Duo-Jet and '59 6120; the latter is heard on the '50s-vibed "What'll It Be Baby Doll?" and provides a thicker, modern-rock sound for "Black Leather Jacket."

What's the inspiration for "Psycho Suzie"?

It's a dive bar here in Minneapolis. My wife and I go there occasionally. It's got velvet Elvises and lots of goofy stuff (laughs). We've had some experiences there. My wife said, "We should write a song about that place." She came up with a lot of those lyrics. That's going to be a fun one live.

"One Particular Chick" has a strong blues feel.

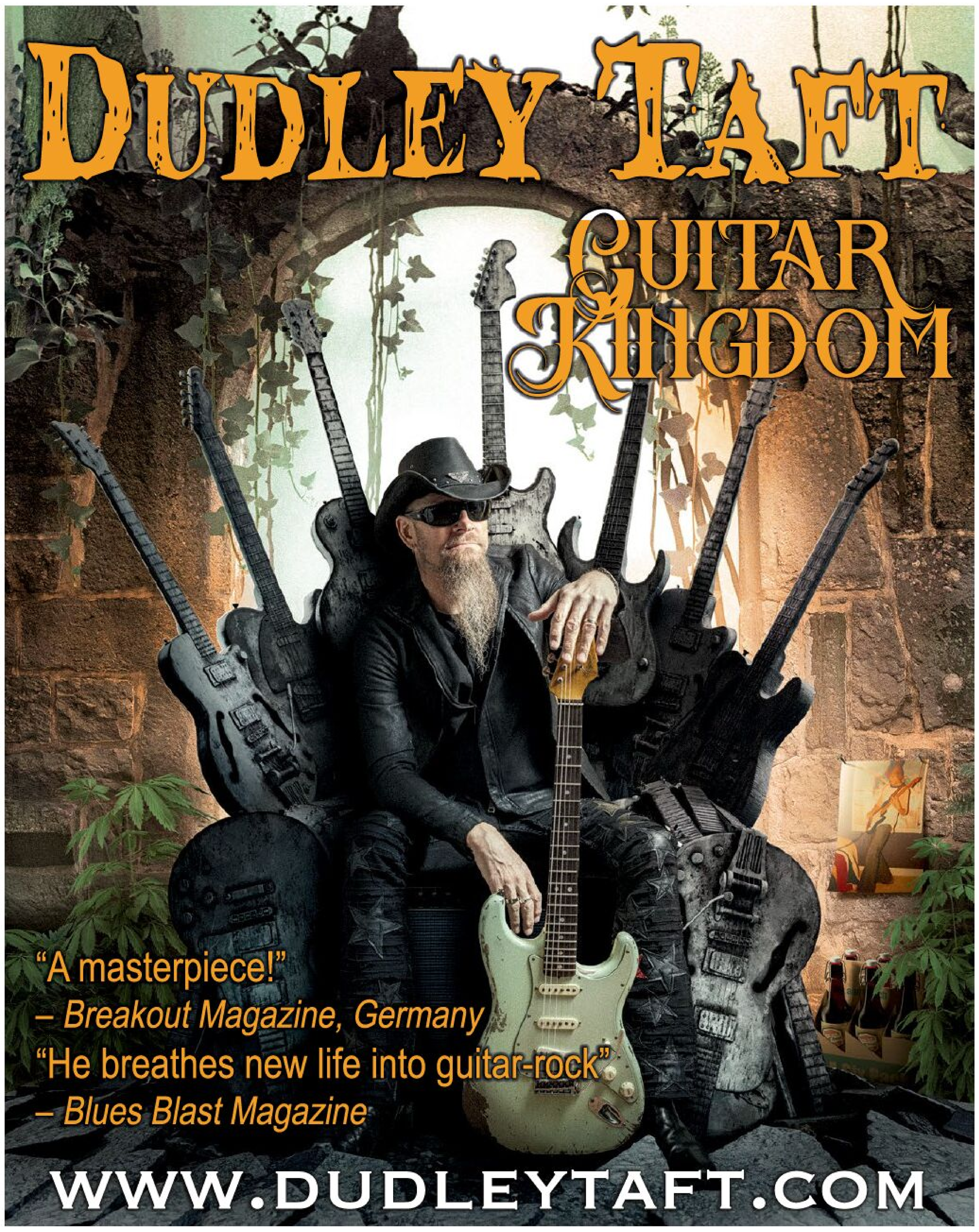
I wrote that on a jazz guitar, then went, "Nah." It sounded almost like a Bobby Darin track, and I love Bobby Darin. I thought, "No, I still have to be Brian." I plugged in the Gretsch and left it dirty. I played the jazz chords on the Gretsch with a dirtier tone, and then it sounded like me. Jazz chords on a jazz guitar is too standard for me. I picked up the Gretsch and cranked it to where it usually is and went, "Yeah, there it is. That's me."

It's got that great melody. Mike sent me just the chorus (sings). I just liked the way it rolled off my tongue. As soon as I read it, I started to sing it. It almost sounded like a movie theme from the '50s.

People are always asking, "What bit of advice would you give people who are trying to create something new, whether it's write a song or start a band?" My answer is, "Don't follow the rules. You follow rules all day long. When you play music, that's the one chance you get to break them." Why would you want to play in just a strict style? Let it all happen. Let it all come out.

So, the guitars/amp setup was simple – your "usual"?

I used the Duo-Jet, 6120, and White Penguin. Any effect I use – reverb, tremolo – has to come from my '63 Bassman – that *is* the tone, with my Roland Space Echo. I just cannot beat that combination. **VG**



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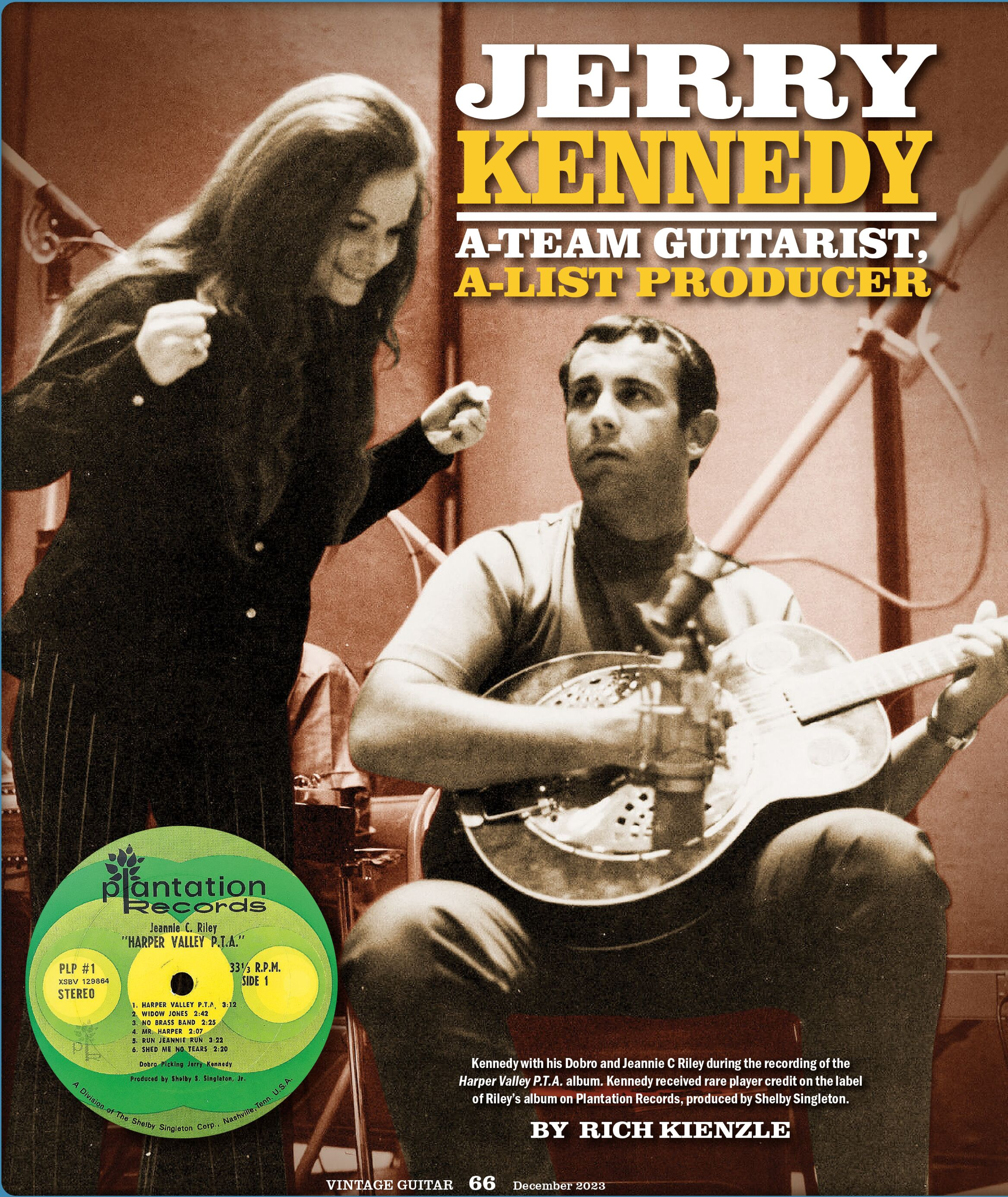


Kennedy with his Dobro and Jeannie C Riley during the recording of the *Harper Valley P.T.A.* album. Kennedy received rare player credit on the label of Riley's album on Plantation Records, produced by Shelby Singleton.

BY RICH KIENZLE

Jerry Glenn Kennedy, a 13-year-old who recorded for RCA Victor as "Jerry Glenn," got the shock of his young life when he walked into a Nashville recording studio in September of 1953. • There, among the studio band hired to accompany him, was his ultimate guitar idol – Chet Atkins. "When I saw him, I froze up," he laughs.

Eight years later, Kennedy began making his own history as a member of Nashville's A-Team, its elite squad of first-call session musicians. Over the next three decades, his electric guitar and Dobro graced countless rock, country, and R&B records, along the way helping more than a few reach #1.

Playing sessions, however, was only part of his story. As Mercury Records' head Nashville producer from 1962 to '84, Kennedy crafted some of Nashville's most-enduring recordings by everyone from Roger Miller to Charlie Rich, Jerry Lee Lewis to Reba McEntire.

Marty Stuart, a longtime admirer and country historian, agrees.

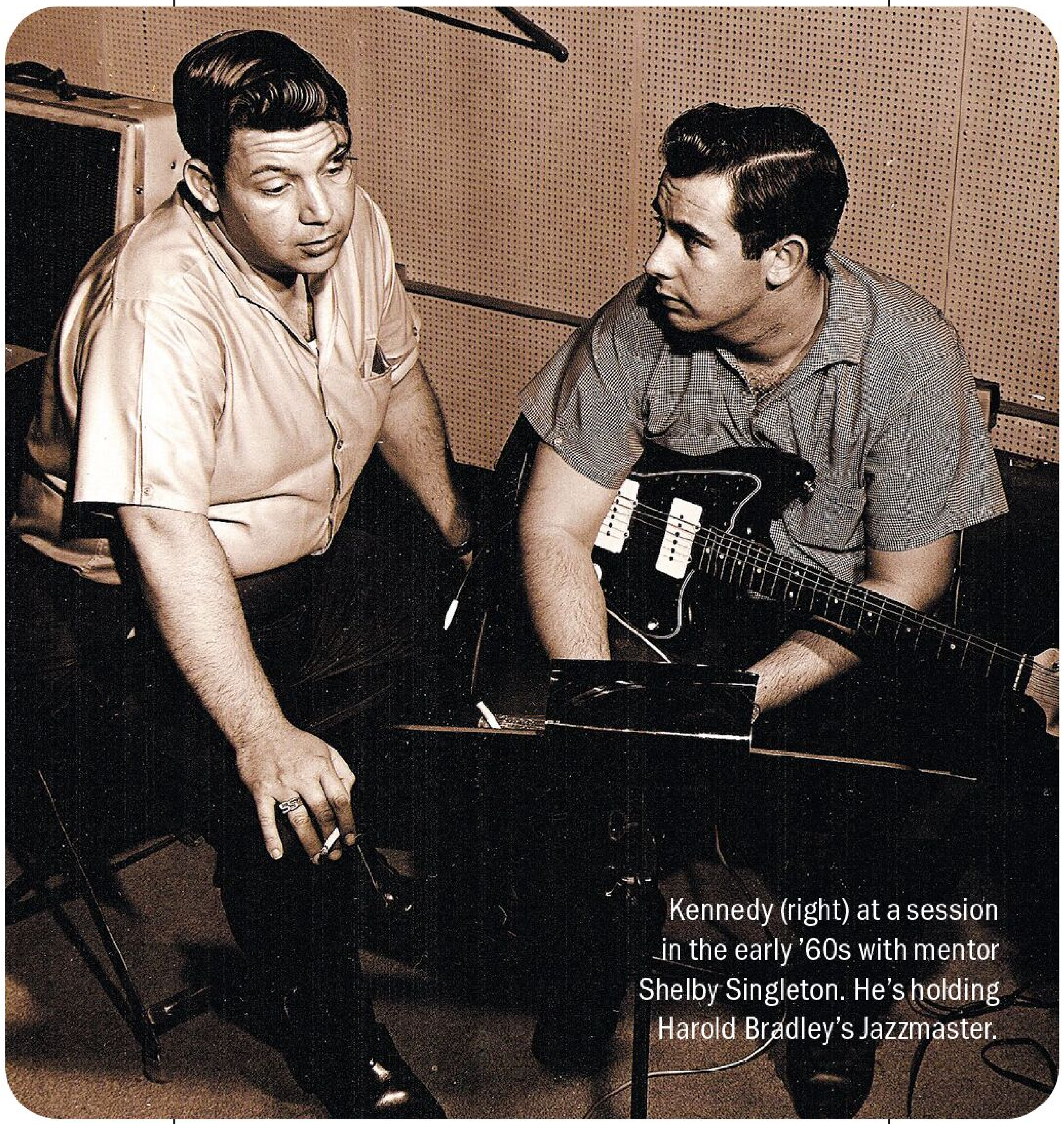
"Jerry is truly one of the lead architects in the creation of the Nashville sound. He played the hound-dog dobro on Jeannie C. Riley's 'Harper Valley PTA' and on many of Tom T. Hall's most-iconic songs, and he somehow navigated Jerry Lee Lewis through a decade of sessions that resulted in some of the greatest country music that has ever been made. And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

"There's no one else on earth who can boast of such things. Any of those feats qualifies him for any and all Halls of Fame."

Shreveport, Louisiana, was the starting point. Born there in 1940, Kennedy grew up in a musical melting pot where country, blues, R&B and Cajun sounds blended freely. His mom, Essie, was a country fan, his dad, Gordon, a deputy sheriff, sang at funerals and weddings.

Shreveport's KWKH radio also shaped his future. At four, Kennedy discovered his first musical hero – the station's country singer, Harmie Smith. "I loved the sound of his guitar," he remembers. A few years later, his parents bought a Silvertone guitar he calls, "...a real piece of junk hangin' around my neck, but it was enough to get me interested." A Harmony Gene Autry model soon followed.

In 1948, KWKH debuted the Saturday night "Louisiana Hayride" show, modeled on the Grand Ole Opry. Later nicknamed "Cradle of the Stars," it launched the careers of Hank Williams, Elvis, Johnny Cash, Jim Reeves, Webb Pierce, Faron Young, and James Burton.


Kennedy (right) at a session in the early '60s with mentor Shelby Singleton. He's holding Harold Bradley's Jazzmaster.

One Friday in June, 1950, Gordon Kennedy took nine-year-old Jerry to his first guitar lesson with Tillman Franks, bassist and guitarist on the "The Hayride." Gordon died unexpectedly the following Monday, and Franks became a surrogate father/mentor while teaching the youngster to play and sing simple three-chord country songs. His progress was swift and within six months Franks had Kennedy (using a Martin 00-18 his mother bought for him) teaching some of his students.

Kennedy took Franks' advice to listen to "The Hayride" and visit when he could. At 12, he won a talent contest emulating "Hayride" singer Jimmy Lee Fautheree, who played guitar behind his head. Afterward, Franks, whose connections stretched beyond Shreveport, contacted RCA country producer Steve Sholes (who discovered Atkins and later signed Elvis) about recording the kid as a singer and guitar player (though he wasn't trying to be a vocalist).

Les Paul and George Barnes were among his other guitar heroes, and he listened to a lot of guitar-oriented material. "R&B things and rock and roll lit a huge fire under me," he says.

On "Hayride" visits, Kennedy sometimes witnessed history in the making. In late 1952, he saw one of Hank Williams' final performances, and while sitting in the balcony in October, 1954, Scotty Moore caught his attention as Elvis Presley performed his debut single "That's All Right." The memory stands out.

"Scotty starts playin', Elvis starts dancin'..." The Hayride audience erupted. "We never heard a note that Scotty played!" he laughs.

On other visits, he saw Lefty Frizzell and Hank Thompson; the solidbody used by Frizzell's guitarist left a deep impression.

"That was the first time I put eyes on a Telecaster," he said. "I heard it and thought, 'I've gotta have one of those!' I begged my mom for a year, and I don't know how – she was not a wealthy lady at all – she was working, selling cookies, and she bought me one."

To plug in, Kennedy purchased a homemade amp.

Straight out of high school in May, 1958, Kennedy walked into a job. Franks, by then running "Hayride," added him to the house band. He swapped the Tele for a Les Paul Standard he bought at Shreveport's J&S Music. Franks had him record a teen ballad in Nashville, backed by the A-Team including guitarists Hank Garland, Grady Martin, and Harold Bradley.

When the show closed in 1960, Kennedy (by then married to former "Hayride" singer Linda Brannon) began freelancing. He swapped the Les Paul to his buddy, future Nashville session guitarist Billy Sanford, for a '54 Strat that Sanford had painted orange.

"My back was beginning to bother me, and the Strat was lighter," he explains. "Three hours with it was nothing."

Occasionally, he worked with Shreveport star Johnny Horton, world-famous for his hit single "The Battle of New Orleans." Franks, who was Horton's manager, played

bass, and Horton's guitarist was Gerald "Tommy" Tomlinson.

By then, Kennedy had a second local mentor in Mercury Records promotion man Shelby Singleton. Impressed by Singleton's uncanny knack for picking hits, Mercury hired him in 1960 as head producer in Nashville, despite the fact he played no instruments.

Seeing the strong sales of Chet Atkins' instrumental LPs, Singleton signed Kennedy and Tomlinson, and on October 28 and 29, 1960, the duo recorded *Guitar's Greatest Hits*, a mix of country, pop, and easy-listening favorites backed by A-Team heavy hitters. Billed as Tom and Jerry, Kennedy used his Strat, Tomlinson his Gretsch 6120.

One moment particularly amused Kennedy.

"Can you imagine a 20-year-old kid sittin' in a chair 10 feet from Hank Garland, trying to play [Garland's signature instrumental] 'Sugarfoot Rag?'" (laughs)

Kennedy's emotions about the record are mixed.

"It could have been so much better," he says. "So many people tell me, 'I'm a guitar player and I learned how to play by listening to that album.'"

It would be their only collaboration, because just days after the session, Tomlinson lost a leg in a car crash that killed Horton and injured Franks.

"It was years before I would listen to that project," Kennedy reflected. "It bothered me *that* much."

Mercury released three subsequent Tom and Jerry instrumental albums with Kennedy and other session players.

Kennedy started making regular trips to Nashville to translate Singleton's musical ideas to the musicians on his sessions. When it became a full-time job, he moved his family there in March, 1961.

"Shelby let me go in (the studio) and come up with stuff

This '67 Coral Electric Sitar is heard on the Peggy Scott/Jo Jo Benson hit "Soulshake."

that was different," he recalls. His skills impressed other producers, including Atkins, who was RCA's top country producer at the time, as well as Decca's Owen Bradley, and Don Law at Columbia, all of whom hired him for sessions.

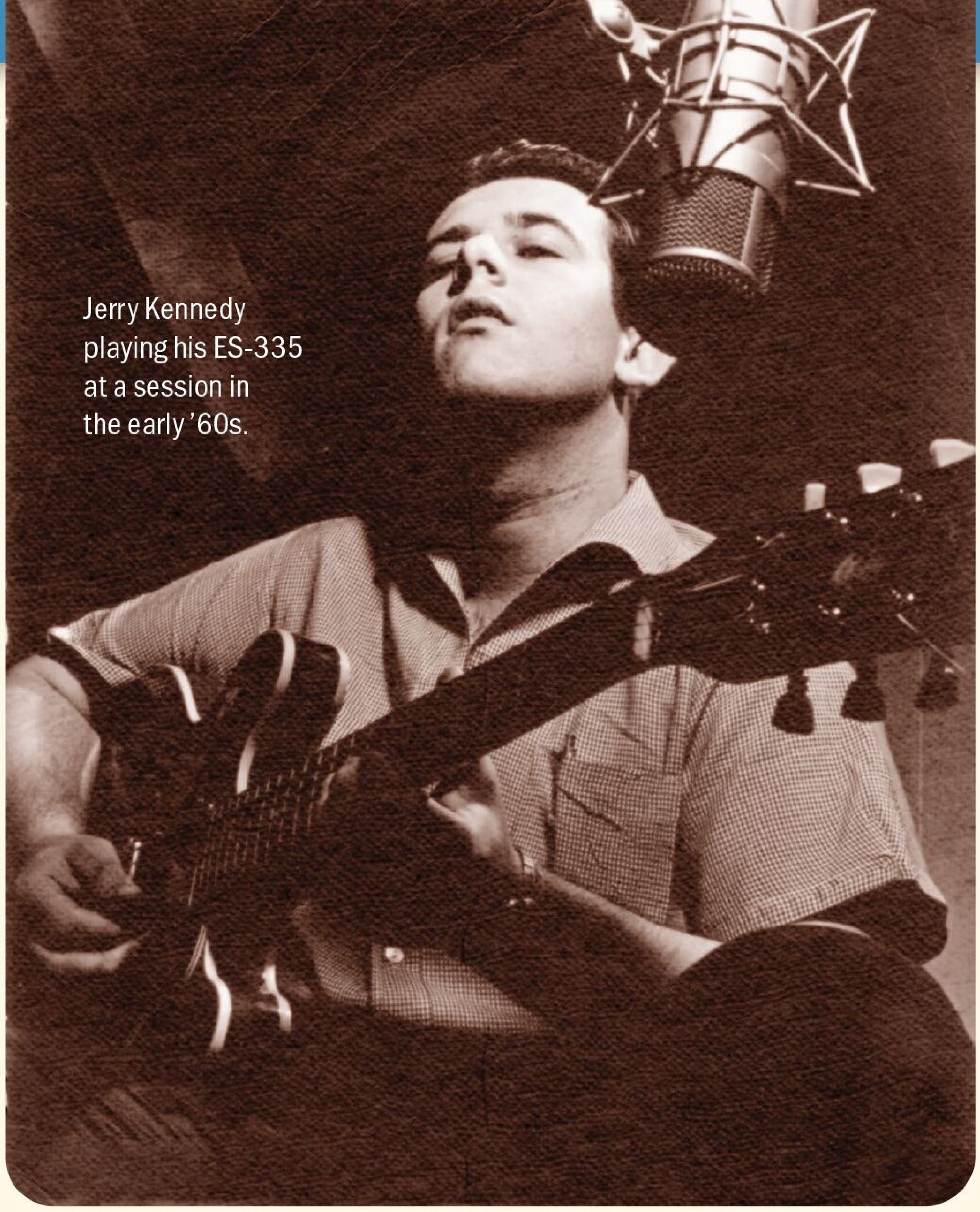
Wanting a new work guitar, Kennedy purchased a new Gibson ES-335 at Hewgley Music. His A-Team status came quickly where most players gradually worked into those hallowed ranks. Singleton was the key.

"God bless him, man," Kennedy says. "I had an in that a lot of players did not have."

Playing electric alongside Hank Garland on Leroy Van Dyke's hit "Walk On By" Kennedy unleashed his hotter side on Presley's 1962 hit "Good Luck Charm." The Bradley brothers became friends and mentors; Harold, considered the Dean of Nashville session pickers was, "...like a big brother when I came to town."

Playing guitar on Bradley's productions was special. He called the sessions, "...some of the most-learning experiences I had as far as producing records. To hear what we did in the studio and hear it on the radio was two totally different things. A lot happened in that control room that we didn't know about."

With more pop and rock acts recording in Nashville, Kennedy, Bradley, and A-Team legend Martin jointly purchased specialty instruments any of them could use for a specific date. One was a roundneck Dobro resonator. "I



Jerry Kennedy playing his ES-335 at a session in the early '60s.

THE "PRETTY WOMAN" RIFF

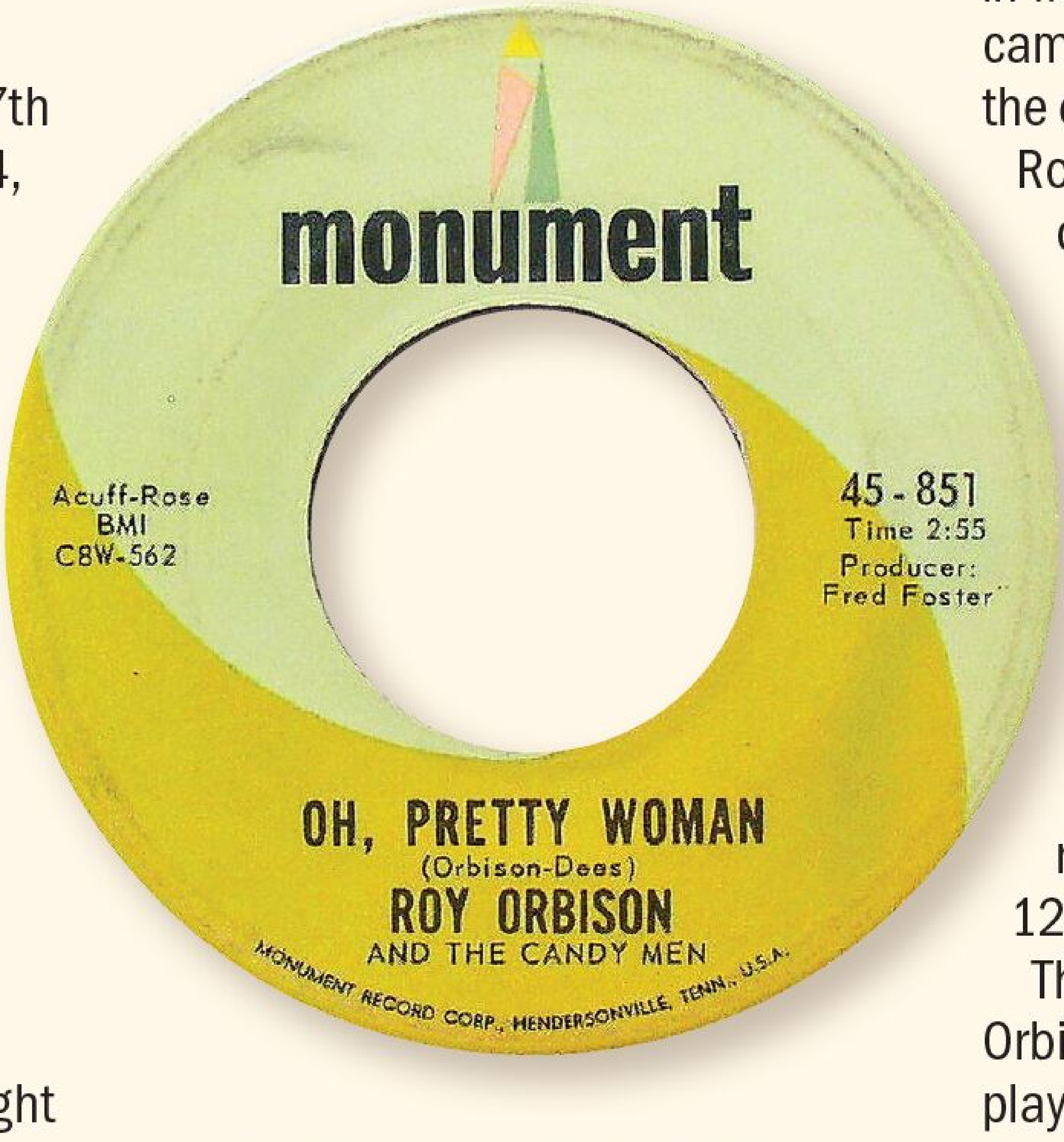
When Jerry Kennedy wasn't producing hits at Mercury Nashville, he was free to assume his role as a top "A-Team" guitarist.

That was his mission as he walked into Fred Foster's Monument Records studio on 17th Avenue North on August 1, 1964, toting his amp and '61 335.

Kennedy found a chunk of A-Teamers setting up, along with Roy Orbison and Foster, the label's head producer. Guitarist Wayne Moss had played in A-Teamer Charlie McCoy's Nashville rock band, the Escorts, Buddy Harman was at the drums. While Henry Strzelecki played bass, McCoy, who often played harmonica on Orbison sessions, had no instrument assigned. Boots Randolph brought his tenor and baritone saxes.

Also present were two members of Orbison's touring band, the Candy Men – drummer Paul Garrison and Billy Sanford, Kennedy's Shreveport guitar-picking buddy. Orbison sat strumming a 12-string.

They were set to record "Oh Pretty Woman," a rocker written by Orbison and his songwriting



partner/harmony singer, Bill Dees. They'd been playing it on the road.

Sanford and Orbison had discussed the fact many of his biggest hits had smooth "Nashville sound" production complete with string, songs the guitar-driven Candy Men couldn't faithfully reproduce onstage. Orbison wanted a more-basic sound on his records.

"I suggested, 'Why don't you write something that would make use of the instruments we have in the band?' Which was three electric guitars, bass, drums, and piano."

Orbison then called Kennedy, telling him, 'Hey, come over so I can show you what I want to do.' Kennedy, Sanford, and Moss stood by as Orbison plucked the bass line to the Little Richard hit "Lucille."

Sanford knew the score; backstage or on the tour bus, he and Orbison would pick riffs together, including "Lucille" and the Everly Brothers' cover version.

"We were playing that riff one time and ended up trying it one note off – the F#. It was kind of an accident and we had a laugh about it."

But that lick – F# and all – became the backbone of the "Pretty Woman" arrangement.

"The riff came along before the song did," Sanford says. "The song must have been in the mill for two or three months before we recorded it."

Sanford explains how the riff evolved.

"The other guitar player in the band was John Rainey Adkins. When we played it live, Roy would kick it off, then I would come in, then John Rainey would come in where Boots and Charlie came in (on the record), being the eight-bar intro that it was. Roy and I had it pretty worked out, and we stuck with it."

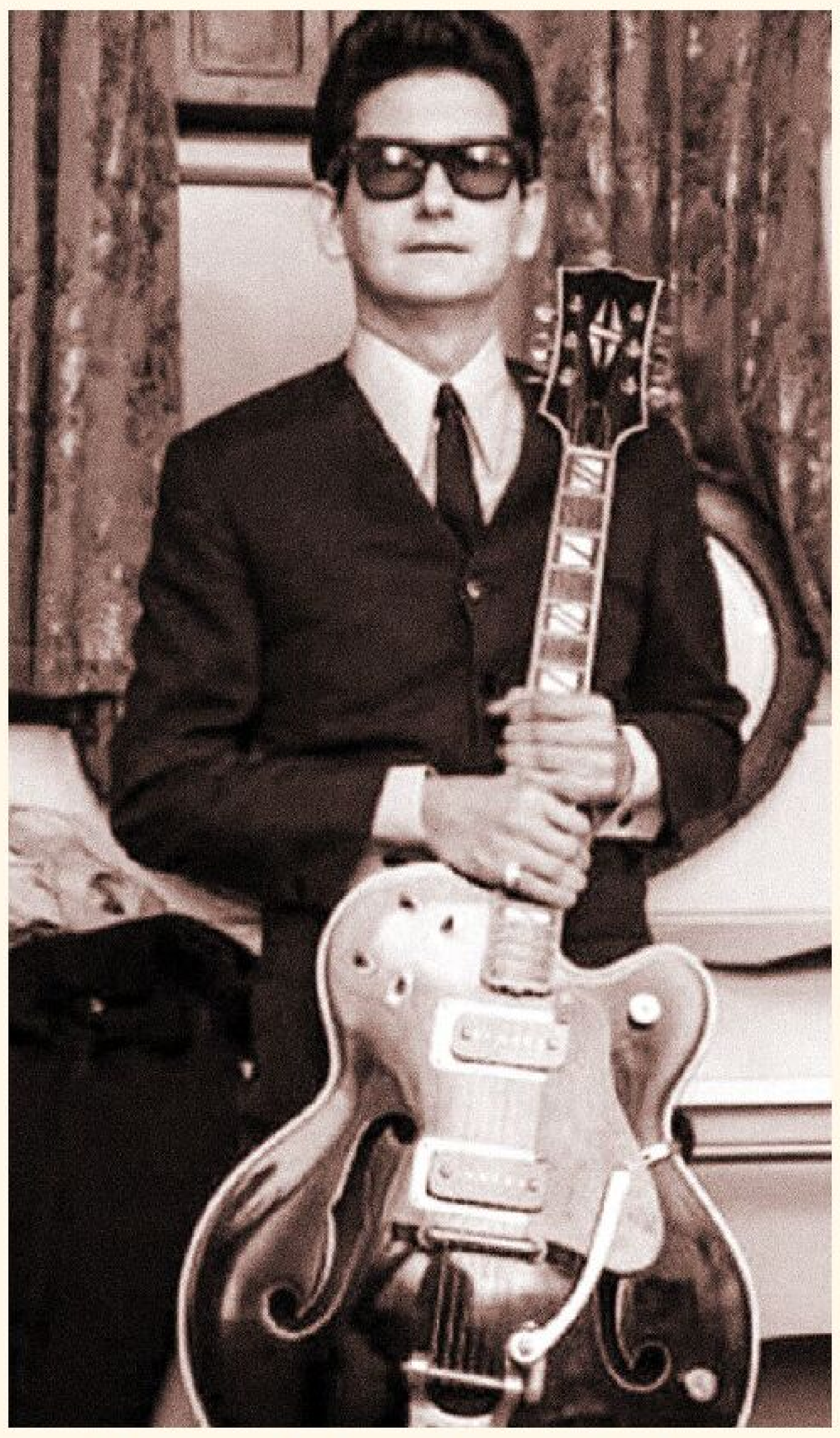
At the session, Orbison and the musicians worked out a fuller arrangement. Orbison kicked off with the 12-string. Kennedy, playing his 335, Sanford, using the Gibson ES-125 he played with the band and Moss would join.

"On the record, if you listen real close, you'll hear that 12-string," Kennedy explains.

The saxes lent heft before Orbison began to sing. Randolph played tenor and McCoy, the A-Team's multi-instrumental master, blew the baritone.

In 2010, McCoy told *VG* how it happened.

"I was sittin' over there with



Roy Orbison in the '60s with his enigmatic hollowbody parts guitar – Gretsch body, Gibson neck, and pickups from a Sho-Bud steel.

Boots and he said, 'Hey, I got my (baritone sax) here. Why don't you grab it?' "I didn't play the whole riff, just two notes, so that riff was not only three guitar players and the bass, (but) the tenor sax and the baritone. That's what made it so powerful."

A landmark rock-guitar riff – sax and all – was born.

The recording left Sanford, who eventually became an A-Team guitarist, amply satisfied.

"The thing I liked was we had talked about making a record with the instruments in the band, without waiting for the big string section to come in."

While Kennedy said he liked the record, he admits he didn't initially see anything particularly endearing about the lick or the song. But he recalls Foster having a sense of its potential.

"Fred and I were good friends, and he called me a week or so later and said he had been playing (the single) for some people."

Released weeks later, "Oh, Pretty Woman" reached #1 in America and several other countries and stands today as one of Orbison's greatest hits, his intense vocal, the hypnotic lyrics, and that powerful, percussive riff making it irresistible.

Jerry Kennedy's '61 ES-335 was featured in the February '19 issue of *VG*.

Photo courtesy of Jerry Kennedy. Roy Orbison. www.royorbison.com

played it on 'Harper Valley PTA,' the Statler Brothers', and Tom T. Hall's stuff. Grady ended up playin' it on some of Loretta Lynn's records," Kennedy said. "It sounds like no Dobro that came along after.

"I was *bending* those strings, not playin' slide. It was tuned like a guitar, and that's the way I played." Kennedy later got sole custody after Bradley sold his share to Martin.

"Grady gave it to me one day. He said, 'You can have the damn thing. I don't want it anymore.' He gave me a piece of paper that granted ownership."

After hearing the prominent 12-string acoustics on the Rooftop Singers' 1963 folk hit "Walk Right In," Kennedy and Bradley bought a Gibson B-25-12. The instrument could be challenging, as Jerry discovered while using it on Bobby Bare's hit "500 Miles Away From Home."

"The neck was wide as a two-by-four," he laughs. "My hand was cramping."

Hank Williams, Jr. later sold him a '46 Martin D-18.

"Harold talked me into that. He said, 'You need a Martin in your collection.' I had a Gibson (acoustic) I wasn't playin' much. Every time I was called, it was usually to do electric," for which he generally used the 335 or borrowed Bradley's Jazzmaster.

"He gave that to me one year. I'd say, 'You ready for it back?' and he'd tell me, 'Aw, keep it. I don't need it yet!' Between that and the 335, I got what I needed, and I also had a Danelectro six-string bass that Harold helped me get."

While Kennedy often used whatever amps were in the studio, he initially owned two Gibsons – a GA-77 RVT Vanguard and an Invader before he and Bradley became long-distance patrons of Manny's, in Manhattan. During a week of New York sessions in July, 1962, they paid a visit.

"We walked in and the guy said, 'Can I help you?' I said, 'Hi, I'm Jerry Kennedy,' and he said, 'You're Jerry Kennedy?' He started yelling, 'Come meet these guys we send all that stuff to!'"

Guitar effects gained popularity in Nashville, but Kennedy stuck with just one – his amplifier's built-in tremolo. "[Epic Records producer Billy Sherrill] said, 'Put that low rumble on there.' On some records it's a bottom-y thing. I used the low-end on the amp, and fast tremolo."

Another change came later that year when he had luthier Dean Porter install palm pedals on the 335.

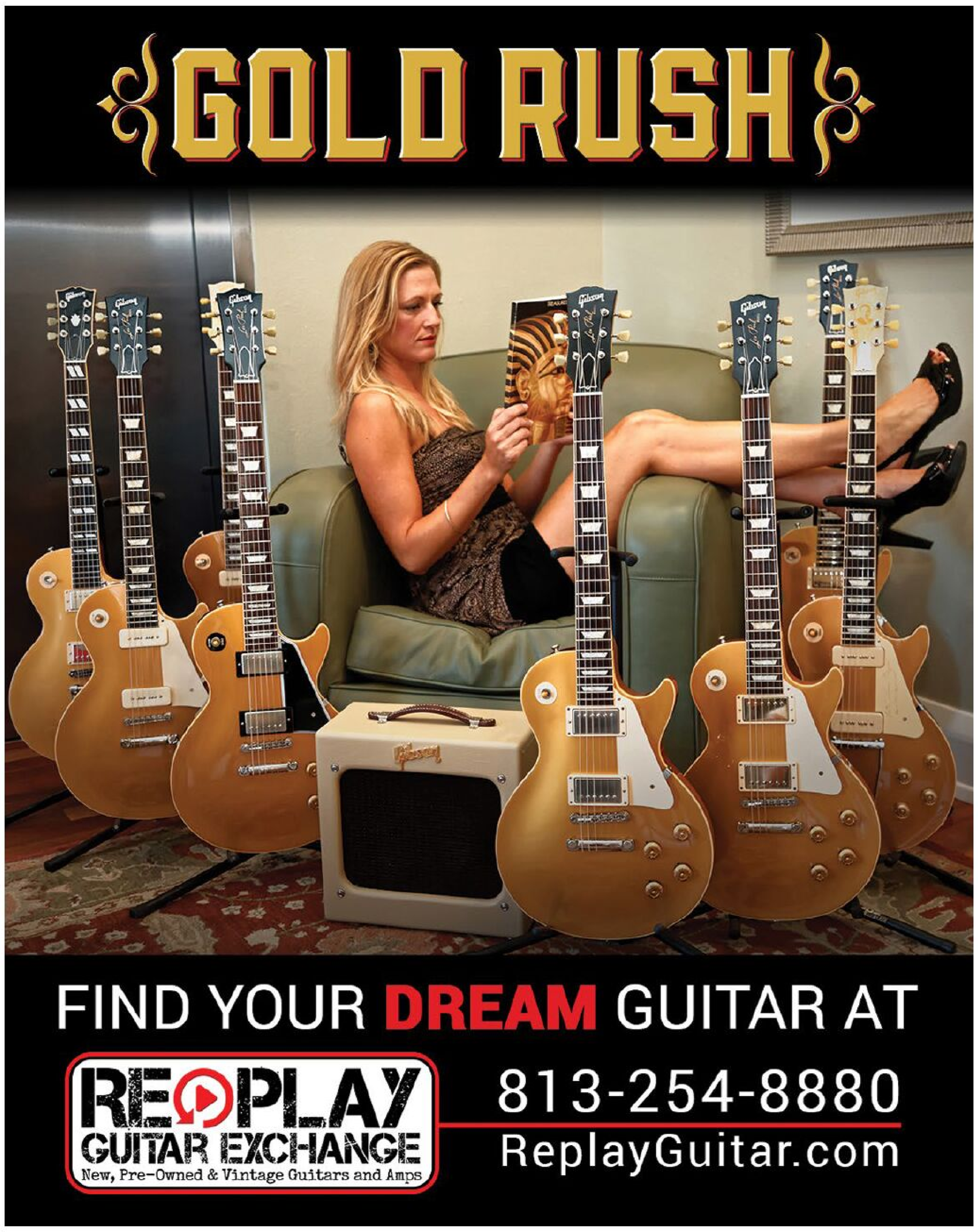
Working sessions for Sherrill in Columbia's Studio B – a converted metal shed – allowed him to enjoy another amp.

"There was a Twin Reverb there that, had I been the wrong kind of guy, would have disappeared with me one day (laughs). I loved that amp so much that I really looked forward to Billy's dates."

After a different New York visit, he plugged into a new Ampeg at Manny's.

"I played it a bit, and it sounded great. So, I said, 'I'll take it,'" and though he can't recall the model, he says it was, "My favorite amp in the studio, except for that Fender." The only other amp he owned was a Standel given to him by Atkins.

Coaxed by Harold Bradley, Kennedy bought this '46 D-18 from Hank Williams, Jr. in the early '70s. Kennedy's '61 ES-335.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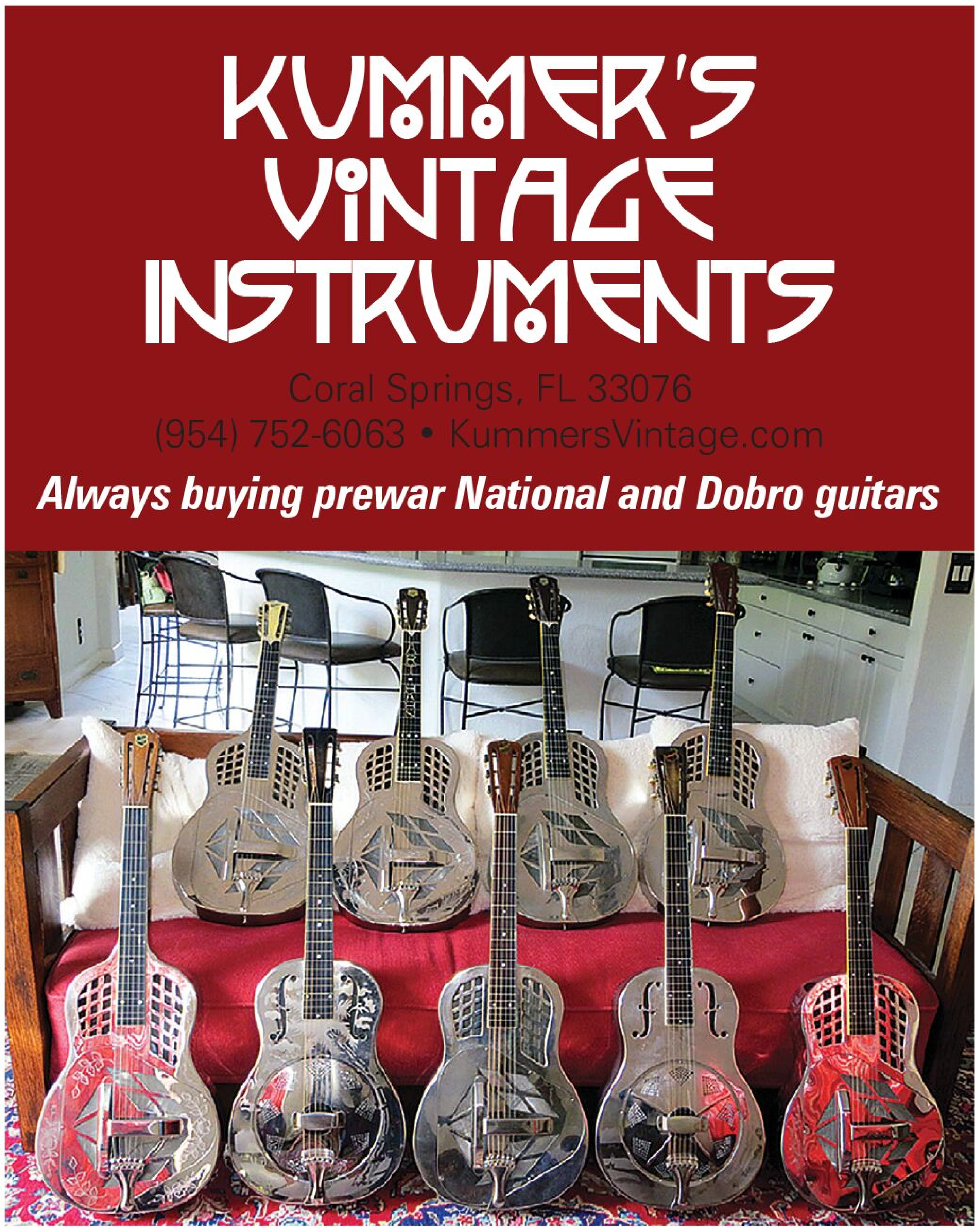
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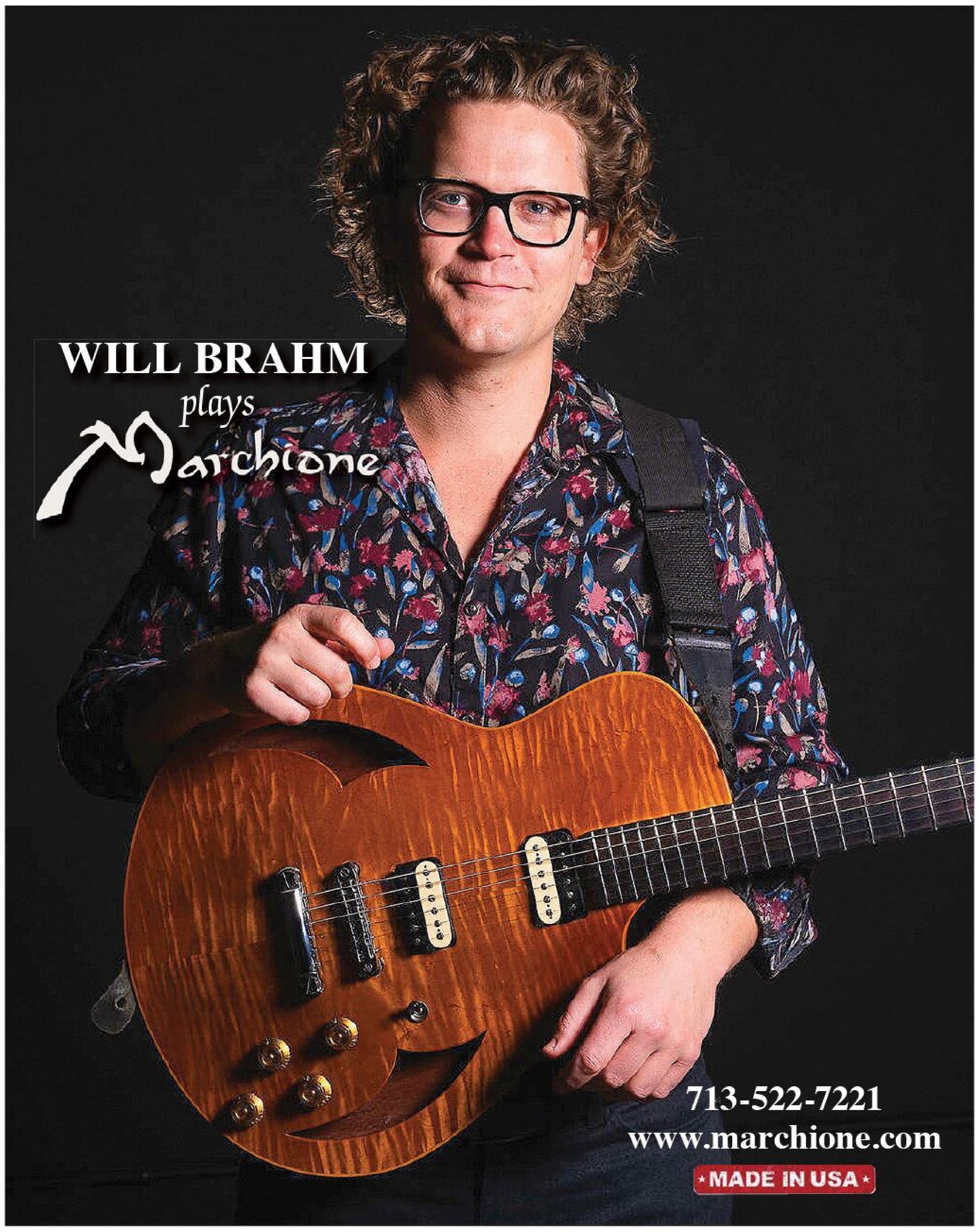
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Kennedy with his trusty Dobro on a 2010 session with Ricky Skaggs.

String choices were simple. Kennedy put Gibson strings on the 335 and Black Diamonds on the Martins.

Nashville didn't have cartage services at the time, so like everyone else, Kennedy carried an amp, his 335, an acoustic, and sometimes the Dobro.

By '63, Singleton, then working in New York, needed someone to supervise Mercury Nashville. Kennedy first shared the duties with guitarist Jerry Reed and A-Team keyboard player/singer Ray Stevens. After Stevens and Reed moved on, Kennedy ran things alone. His contract allowed him to continue freelancing.

"I loved playing so much, I *couldn't* give it up," he explains. "And at some point, if they asked me to give up one, I'd say, 'Let me pick!'"

At Mercury, he created a core quintet of A-Teamers – Bradley, rhythm guitar wizard Ray Edenton, drummer Buddy Harman, bassist Bob Moore, and pianist Pig Robbins. Speaking rapid-fire, Kennedy called them, "Harold, Ray, Buddy, Bob, Pig."

In a 2009 interview, Moore fondly recalled those days, saying of Kennedy, "When he'd set up a session… He would say 'Set the guys up'…to [his assistant] Trish, and Trish would call us. We were his gang."

Kennedy's guitar intuition factored into the first star he developed for Mercury – singer/songwriter Roger Miller. An established hitwriter, Miller was deeply frustrated he hadn't found sustained success as a singer in his own right. Kennedy signed him, and his first session happened in in January of '64, tracking quirky, zany originals with an eccentric, jazzy, singing style that stimulated Kennedy's creativity.

"Three or four songs in, I realized this is might be different," he said.

Framing Miller with acoustic guitars and a rhythm section gave the performances a relaxed guitar-pull ambience that was well-suited by Kennedy's simple approach.

Three consecutive hits changed Miller's life; "Dang Me," "Chug-a-Lug," and his Grammy-winning 1965 signature, "King of the Road." As his hit streak continued, Kennedy maintained that sound, later adding Chip Young to fingerpick. As a producer, Kennedy told the sidemen to avoid adding fills around Miller's vocals.

"That was a running joke," he laughs. 'The first man that fills, sign the (union) card and leave!' I've always felt you have to let a great song breathe. I'm glad it worked out because it let the songs (flow) free."

Some of Kennedy's own session calls involved overdubs, one being the memorable bent-note intro to Tammy Wynette's definitive 1968 ballad "Stand by Your Man." Sherrill, dissatisfied with the original intro, asked Kennedy to create a new one, and add octave harmony to a lick Wayne Moss played going into Wynette's first and last choruses. Kennedy did it with the 335.

In 1966, Mercury signed its newest singer/songwriter, Tom T. Hall. Dubbed "The Storyteller," Hall created vignettes of everyday life and sang them in a clipped, no-nonsense voice. Kennedy produced using the same simple approach he'd developed with Miller, this backing with the acoustic guitars of Edenton and Young. Bradley played tic-tac bass, and Kennedy overdubbed 12-string or Dobro. "All of Tom's stuff you hear Dobro on, I'm guilty!" he laughs.

To reinvent Sun rocker Jerry Lee Lewis as a piano-playing country balladeer, in '68, Kennedy placed him in a fiddle/steel honky-tonk setting. Joining Lewis' fiddler/guitarist Kenny Lovelace were Young, pedal-steel great Lloyd Green, and Moore's powerful bass. Kennedy used a similar sound behind his "Louisiana Hayride" buddy Faron Young.

Singleton, who by then had founded a record label, returned to Nashville in '67 and Kennedy was his first-call guitarist; he played Dobro on a July '68 date for up-and-coming singer Jeannie C. Riley; "Harper Valley PTA" was a caustic Hall-penned tale that skewered small-town hypocrisy. Singleton wanted hot-and-heavy Dobro behind Riley's sassy vocal. After they'd run through it, Kennedy paused.

"I thought I was ruining her record," he said, but an assistant told him, "Shelby wants more of that!"

"I said, 'You got too much of it now!' But he said, 'No, play more!' So I obliged."

Driving back to Nashville after the

Kennedy as a boy with his ’50 00-18.

sessions, Kennedy heard the song on the radio. Despite its raw, hard-country twang, it topped the *Billboard* country and pop charts that fall.

For Singleton’s R&B acts, Kennedy played behind Ruth Brown and Clyde McPhatter. His Danelectro Coral Electric Sitar graced the Peggy Scott/Jo Jo Benson hit “Soulshake.”

A-Team pedal-steel master and producer Pete Drake had gained prominence beyond the country field for recording with Bob Dylan and other rockers. In June, 1970, months after the Beatles dissolved, Drake was producing Ringo Starr’s *Beaucoups of Blues* country album. Kennedy was part of a gang of A-Teamers booked to back the former Beatle. Ringo’s knowledge impressed him.

“We spent four or five hours shootin’ the bull, and he was a nice guy. He knew his country artists, knew who did what.”

From 1970 to 2002, Kennedy’s production repeatedly propelled the Statler Brothers to the top, Dobro added where appropriate. He also produced the first hits by Mercury artists Johnny Rodriguez and Reba McEntire. In ’74, the label paid tribute with the album *Jerry Kennedy and Friends*.

The moves between production and session work continued until ’84, when he left Mercury to launch JK Productions.

“I had never produced a record in all those 22 years for anybody other than Mercury,” he said. “I wanted to cut for different labels, and I got good shots with Mel McDaniel and Moe Bandy.”

He recorded fewer artists as an independent and brought his session career to a close, his final session being for Sherrill. The Statler Brothers, however, insisted he produce them, which he did until they left Mercury. They once featured him on their Nashville Network TV show, playing the famous “Pretty Woman” licks and, behind the quartet, his Dobro.

As Kennedy eased out of four decades in music, the family name carried on through his sons; Gordon, a guitarist in the ’80s Christian band White Heart, co-wrote the 1996 hit “Change the World” for Eric Clapton as well as other country and pop hits. He also collaborated with Peter Frampton on his *Fingerprints* album in 2006. He’s currently touring with Garth Brooks and curates his father’s vintage instruments. Other sons Shelby (named for Singleton) and Bryan are singers, the latter doubles as Brooks’ opening act and tour manager.

Honored by Nashville’s Musicians’ Hall of Fame and the Country Music Hall of Fame, which featured him in their “Nashville Cats” series of interviews, Kennedy, now 83, reflects on it all with pride and satisfaction.

“I’ve been blessed to have been here when we were creating so much great music,” he says.

Whether working in the studio or running things from the control room, he holds a consistent perspective built from his first sessions as a producer.

“I tell this story often. (I was) looking at a room full of geniuses. I’d sit there and just get a grin on my face. They’d start playin’ and the only thing better was being in the room with them, and that grin probably got bigger. I’m so glad I was there, hearing what we heard. That was the biggest kick.”

He’d get a similar feeling when chatting with former Monument Records owner Fred Foster, who produced Orbison’s timeless rockers and other country standards, and who booked him to play on “Pretty Woman.”

“We’d get to talking about what we had done, and he never ended a conversation without saying [imitates Foster’s gravelly voice], ‘Jerry, I’m glad we did it when we did it!’ And I am, too.”

The guitars belonging to Jerry and Gordon Kennedy were featured in the October ’07 issue of *VG*, and the fascinating story of Jerry’s ’50 Martin 00-18 was in December ’21. Both can be read at www.VintageGuitar.com.

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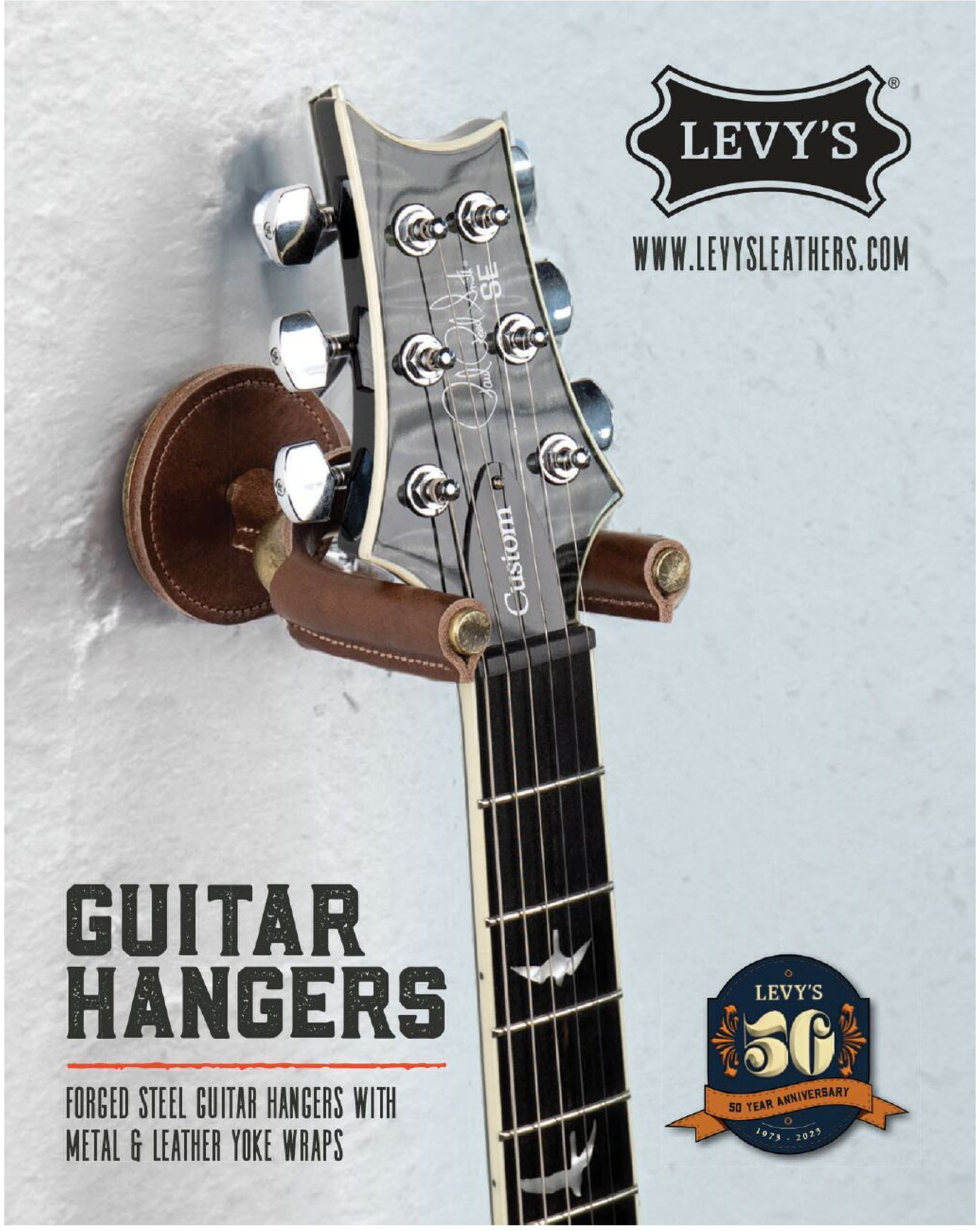

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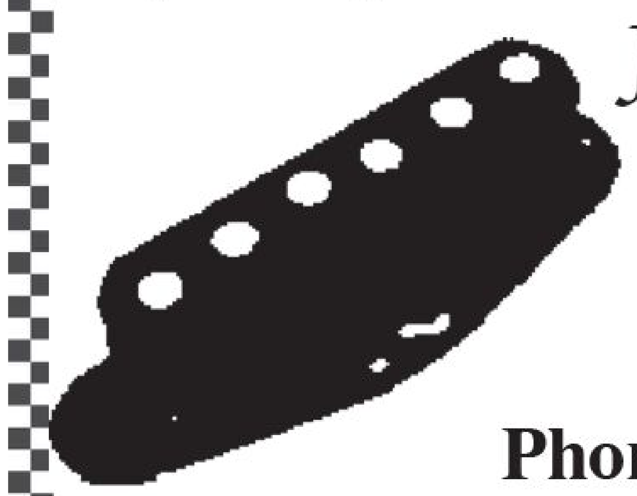

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OCTOBER

33rd Annual Chicago Vintage Guitar Expo, Sunday, October 1st 2023 9am-3pm at the Holiday Inn, 1000 Busse Rd, Elk Grove Village, Il 60007. For more info Contact Beverly Bakes, R&B Productions at 847-931-0707 or Bakesguitar@aol.com

Southern Ohio Guitar Show, Sunday, October 15 from 11am – 4pm at the Yoctangee Park Armory, Tritscheller Rd. Chillicothe, OH. For more information visit www.sohioguitarshow.com

Woodstock Invitational Luthier's Showcase, October 13-15, 2023, at the Bearsville Center Woodstock NY. For more info go to www. WoodstockInvitational.com

Guitarlington 2023, October 21-22 at the Arlington Convention Center, 1200 Ballpark Way, Arlington TX. For more info contact Ruth Brinkmann (817) 312-7659 ruthmbrinkmann@gmail.com, Larry Briggs (918) 288-2222 larryb@stringswest.com, Dave Crocker (417) 850-4751 davelcrocker@gmail.com, Fax 817-592-3381 www.amigoguitarshows.com

NOVEMBER

Phoenix Guitar Show, November 4th at the Roberto-Venn School of Luthiery, 1012 Grand Ave., Phoenix from 11am to 4pm. Free to attend. For more information, visit www.phoenixguitarshow.com

Great American Guitar Show (Fall Philly), November 4-5 at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center – Hall A, 100 Station Ave., Oaks, PA. For more info contact Bee 3 Vintage at (828) 298-2197 or visit www.bee3vintage.com.

The Ann Arbor Music Instrument Swap, Sunday, November 5th at Weber's Inn, 3050 Jackson Ave, Ann Arbor, MI 48103 from 10am - 4pm. For more information contact Shawn VanSteeland at 517-410-6409 or at info@musicinstrumentswap.com

The Chicagoland Guitar Show, Sunday, November 12th 9:00am to 4:00pm. Atlantis banquets in Prospect Crossing Plaza, 1273 n Rand road Arlington Heights, Il 60004. Sponsored by Midwest Buynsell and Rock & Roll Vintage. $125 vendor booths. Contact Wayne at 773-545-2020

DECEMBER

Rose Quarter Guitar Show, Sunday December 10th, 2023 from10am-3:30pm at the Veterans Memorial Coliseum 300 N Ramsay Wy, Portland, OR 97227 Contact: bruceadolph@mac.com www.westcoastguitarshows.com **(See Advertisement on page 77.)**

Everything Rock & Roll Guitar Show, Sunday December 10th, 2023 from 11:30am-4pm at the cfsbank Event Center, 111 Gallitin Rd., Belle Vernon PA 15012. For more information contact Scott Talarico at 412-716-8411 or scotpro2@gmail.com. **(See Advertisement on page 75.)**

2024

JANUARY

Winter Ohio Guitar Show, Sunday, January 7, 2024 at the Makoy Center 5462 Center St, Hilliard, OH 43026 Show hours 11:30-5:00. For more info, contact Marc at (740) 797-3351.

guitardigest@frontier.com, www.ohioguitarshows.com.

Amigo Bay Area World Guitar Show, January 13-14, 2024, Marin Center Exhibit Hall, 10 Avenue of the Flags, San Rafael, CA. For more info call Larry Briggs, 918-288-2222, amigoshows@stringswest.com,www.amigoguitarshows.com.

Amigo SoCal World Guitar Show, January 27-28, 2024, OC Fair & Event Center, Arlington & Fairview St., Costa Mesa, CA. For more info call Larry at (918) 288-2222, amigoshows@stringswest.com, www.amigoguitarshows.com.

FEBRUARY

Orlando International Guitar & Music Expo, February 2-4, 2024 at the Central Florida Fairgrounds, 4603 West Colonial Drive, Orlando, FL. Public hours Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4. For more info contact Morty Beckman at (850) 962-4434, guitarexpo22@yahoo.com or visit www.guitarexpo.net **(See Advertisement on page 76.)**

MARCH

Sarasota Guitar and Amp Show, March 8th - 12pm -5pm (dealer day), March 9th and 10th - 9am - 6pm at the Sarasota Municipal Auditorium, 801 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, FL 34236. Contact: Kevin Wood at 941-993-3098 or visit Sarasotaguitarshow.com

Carolina Guitar Show – Asheville, March 9-10, 2024 at the WNC Ag Center I-26, Exit 40, 1301 Fanning Bridge Rd., Fletcher/Asheville, NC 28732. For more info, call Bee 3 Vintage at 828-298-2197 or visit www.bee3vintage.com

Cincinnati Guitar Show , 10am - 4pm -Our 30th Anniversary Show - Sharonville Conv. Cntr, 11355 Chester Rd, Sharonville Oh 45246. Contact Denny 513-503-1072 - more info at cincyguitarshow.com & FB.

Illinois Guitar & Gear Expo, Sunday March 10, 2024 at the Kankakee County Fairgrounds 213W 4000S Rd. Kankakee,IL 60901, 10am – 3pm For more info, visit: https://www.illinoisguitarexpo.com/

Amigo Nashville Guitar Show 2024, March 23, 10-5 and March 24, 10-4. Williamson County Ag EXPO Park, 4215 Long Lane, Franklin, TN. For more info contact Ruth Brinkmann (817) 312-7659 ruthmbrinkmann@gmail.com, Larry Briggs (918) 288-2222, shows@amigoguitarshows.com, Dave Crocker, davelcrocker@gmail.com (417) 850-4751. www.amigoguitarshows.com.

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Upcoming Events

APRIL

The Greater Pittsburgh Guitar Show, Sunday, April 7, 2024. Printscape Arena, 114 Southpointe Blvd., Canonsburg, PA. Show hours 11-4. For more info contact Scott Talarico at (412) 716-8411, scotpro@comcast.net or visit www.guitarshowusa.com.

MAY

Dallas International Guitar Festival, May 5-7, 2023 at the Dallas Market Hall, 2200 N Stemmons Fwy, Dallas, TX, For more info visit www.guitarshow.com.

Jake's Guitar Show & Music Swap Meet, May 4-5, at the Indoor Treasure Barn, 1380 Rt 100, Barto, Pa. Hours 8-1. For more information contact Justin at (484)256-6515 or info@jakesfleamarket.com

JUNE

Summer Ohio Guitar Show, Sunday, June 23, 2024 at the Makoy Center 5462 Center St, Hilliard, OH 43026 Show hours 11:30-5:00. For more info, contact Marc at (740) 797-3351. guitardigest@frontier.com, www.ohioguitarshows.com.

SEPTEMBER

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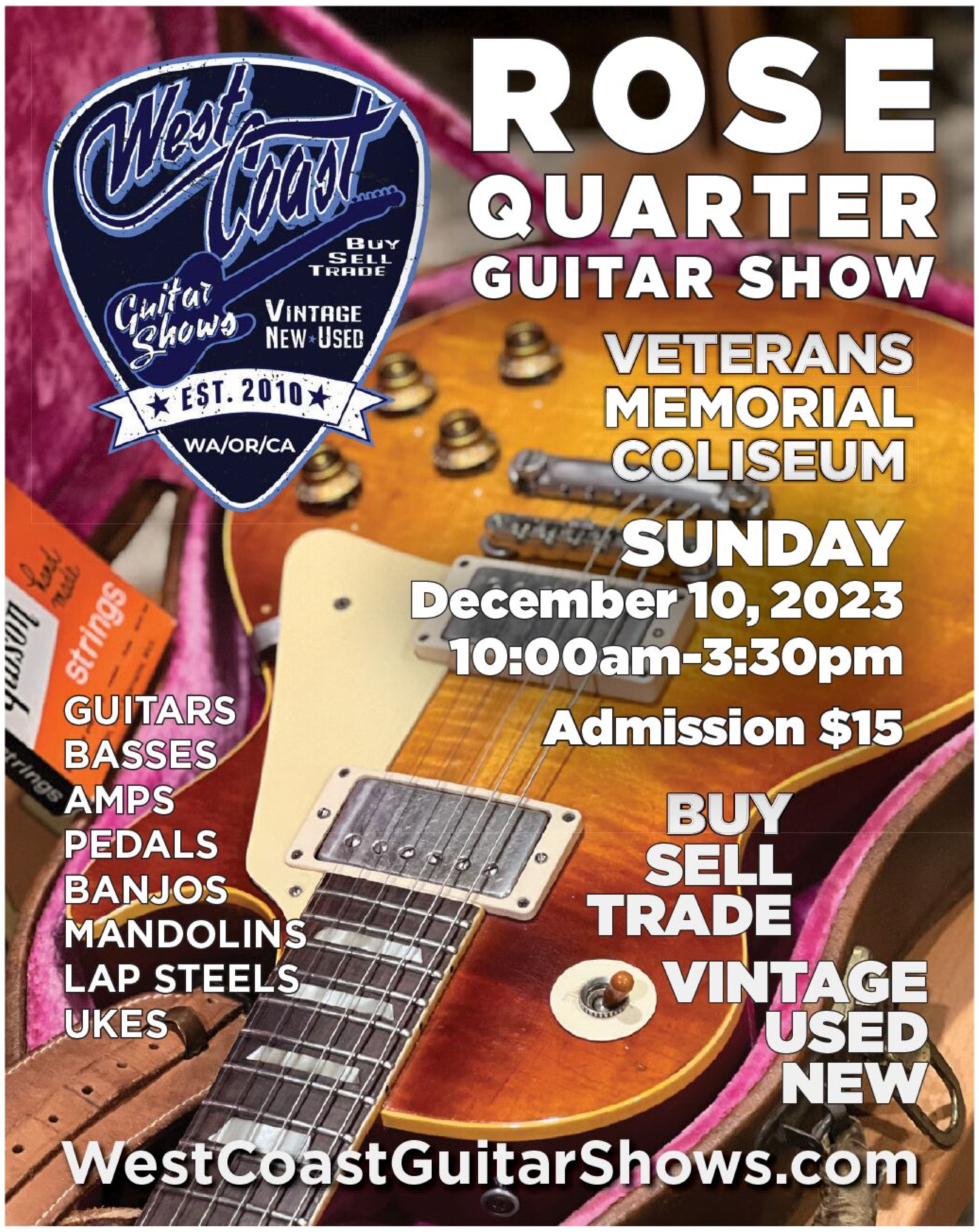

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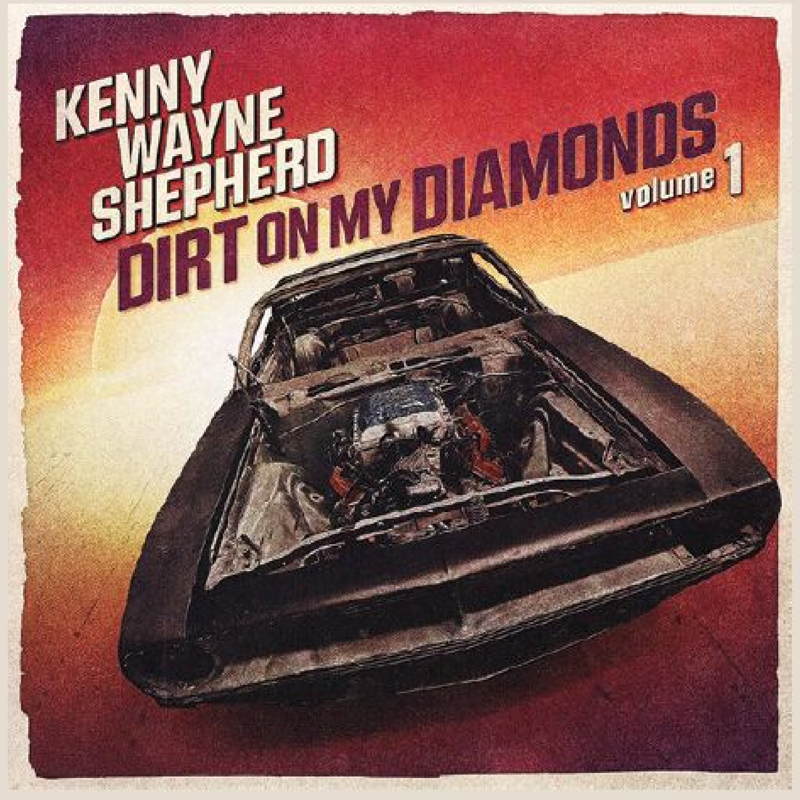
POWER AND DURABILITY

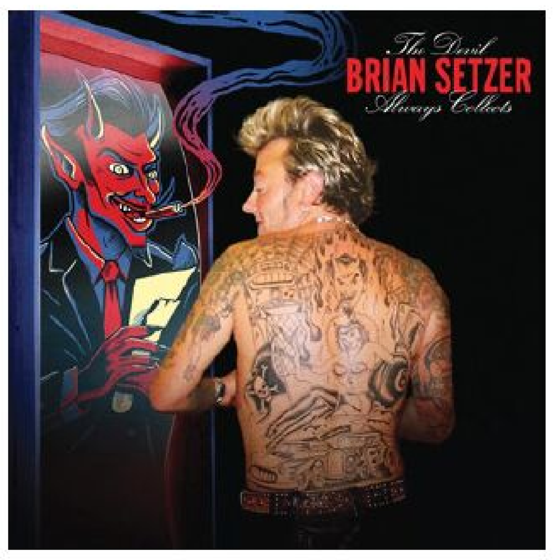
It's easy to summarize Kenny Wayne Shepherd's raw-yet-modern blues approach. Joined by co-vocalist Noah Hunt, Shepherd delivers a lyric straight up. His remarkable guitar chops allow him to create riveting instrumental interludes that excite yet never overstay their welcome. He doesn't constantly quote licks from past greats, yet on every break his ideas carry their spirit.

This album's eight tracks – seven originals and one timeless cover – include Shepherd singing the macho anthem "Bad Intentions" straight over a simple riff, setting the stage for two brief, dazzling lead excursions, the second closing out the song. The title song reflects on embracing the grittier sides of life, with a brief and effective guitar eruption. On Elton John's "Saturday Night's Alright for Fighting," he tears into the vocal before setting off a tornado of screaming bends and riffs.



Kenny Wayne Shepherd
Dirt on My Diamonds, Vol. 1

Wah dominates his breathtaking (if brief) solo on both "Sweet & Low" and "Best of Times," the latter a look at surviving a tough economy. The sole conventional blues, the minor-key shuffle "Ease My Mind," is pure KWS, yet one could readily imagine it as a Buddy Guy tune. All told, this album affirms the power and durability of the style Shepherd has developed over nearly three decades. ***– Rich Kienzle***



Brian Setzer
The Devil Always Collects

We can always rely on Brian Setzer records to bring the swagger, no matter the project – solo, Brian Setzer Orchestra, or Stray Cats. This new solo release brings his trademark steamroller blend of rockabilly, no-frills rock, and splashes of punk energy. He often adds surprising touches; this go-around, female backing vocals bring depth to some songs.

"Rock Boys Rock" charges along as an appropriate opener, while the sly title track includes Setzer's catchy up-and-down guitar riff. The first single, a chugging cover of Del Reeves' 1965 song "Girl on the Billboard," didn't come alive until Setzer got the huge, twangy sound he wanted with his Gretsch 1957 Duo Jet 6131 Firebird. "The Living Dead" is slow and woozy, led by appropriately fitting guitar work.

The album's best song is "Black Leather Jacket," a fast, more-modern rocker. Crafty lyrics are part of the charm of the instantly likable rockabilly tune, "A Dude'll Do (What a Dude'll Do)," while "One Particular Chick" is a swinging blend of blues and rockabilly. Throughout this solid set, Setzer does what *he* does – deliver vintage sounds in a fresh way. ***– Bret Adams***

Franck L. Goldwasser
Who Needs This Mess?

After moving from his native France to Oakland in '83, Franck Goldwasser haunted blues clubs, quickly earning the nickname "Paris Slim." The list of blues luminaries and lesser-knowns he played with is too lengthy to enumerate here, but he became a regular at Eli's Mile High club, leader of the house band at Larry Blake's, and member of the Mannish Boys. To say he earned his stripes is an understatement.

He sets the guitar bar super-high on the opening "Don't Give Up On Me, Baby," one of 14 songs he penned or collaborated on, in addition to an impassioned take on Elmore James' "Bleedin' Heart."

Lending support in spots are heavyweights Jim Pugh, Kirk Fletcher, Sugaray Rayford, and Charlie Musselwhite. The instrumental "Disküm Baåb Uleh Shun" is a Goldwasser/Fletcher tonefest, while Slim provides lap steel on "Sobby Doggy Boogy," likely inspired by his mentor Sonny Rhodes. Yet a solo fingerpicking "Raggmazazz" finds him paying homage to Chet Atkins.

"Sweet Cream" flirts with *fresh* cream, as it were, as well as Mississippi Hill Country blues, while Ralph Carter's funky bass underpins Goldwasser's lowdown bottleneck on "Skwurley."

Kenny Wayne Shepherd: Jim Arbogast.

Rose Sinclair

BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES OF JAZZ

By Dan Forte

The notion of blurring the boundaries of jazz is almost laughable, since the umbrella already covers so many variations. From the Dixieland of King Oliver to the swing of big-bands like Tommy Dorsey's, Gypsy jazz of Django Reinhardt, bebop of Charlie Parker, cool school of Chet Baker, soul jazz of Jack McDuff, free jazz of Ornette Coleman, and smooth jazz of David Sanborn, one wonders what Dorsey would think about it all today.

A handful of new releases color outside the lines, while some blur the accepted boundaries in other respects. But, as one of the great composers and bandleaders of the 20th century, Duke Ellington, said, "If jazz means anything, it is freedom of expression." Then again, he compared the word itself to the flushing of a toilet.

On her previous album, *Left Right Left*, drummer, composer, and educator **Tina Raymond** mixed originals with jazz treatments of folk and gospel. For the brand-new *Divinations*, her trio features Andrew Renfroe on guitar and Karl McComas-Reichl on upright bass. The pieces were inspired by tarot cards, but each stands on its own and bears repeated listenings.

You'd think with such instrumentation, guitar would typically provide the melody – the voice of the composition, as it were. But in the opening "Swainson's Hawk," guitar and bass double a riff while Raymond plays around their rhythm. Renfroe eventually solos, as does McComas-Reichl, both stunningly, with Raymond taking brief turns.

"Eight Of Wands" has a more-contemporary jazz feel with quasi-Indian touches by Renfroe, while "The Emperor" swells with power chords and angular lines reminiscent of John Scofield's rockier side. "The Lovers" is a beautiful ballad with guitar and bass both displaying lyrical sensibilities. Raymond's chops are top-notch, but her interplay and mastery of dynamics and texture are so keen that she's essentially a melodic instrument herself. When she solos, she's another band member stepping forward, and it's always interesting, never gratuitous.

"The Power Of Many In The Soul Of One," covering wide shifts of emotion across almost 14 minutes, opens *Book Of Stories* by **Critical Response**. It begins with the cry of composer Jason Kao Hwang's uncannily vocal-like electric violin. Guitarist Anders Nilsson gets his aggressions out, as drummer Michael T.A. Thompson sets off mini explosions.

"Upside Circle Down" starts with the cooing-bird vibrato sounds of the violin, with guitar through an Electro-Harmonix Nano POG. Adding an octave below and above the note, it achieves an organ sound. Jason's violin through a DigiTech Whammy (also octaves below and above) gets a reverse-attack effect, while Anders adopts a clean tone. Eventually, things sound like deconstructed bebop – albeit with lots of liberties taken.

The duo known as **After Ours** definitely begs the question, "*What is* or *isn't* jazz?" On their second full-length, *Music For Cats*, Arthur Schroeder plays drums and Eli Kahn is on hybrid seven-string (covering guitar and bass ranges) and loops. They list modern jazz, grunge, instrumental hip-hop, and experimental music as influences. It's as much rock as jazz or anything else, but from the funky "Cattitude" to stellar guitar tones in "Nice Boys," it's a ride worth taking.

Rose Sinclair calls her niche "cocktail steel," and while it would be at home in a tiki bar, it's not mere kitsch. As her term implies, she plays steel guitar (the non-pedal variety) and, on *Corcovado*, demonstrates that she can hang on just about any jazz bandstand.

Jazz played on steel is nothing new, but it's far from widespread. In '63, Buddy Emmons' *Steel Guitar Jazz* was groundbreaking, although prior to that, Western swing steelers like Joaquin Murphey (with Spade Cooley and Tex Williams) and Vance Terry (with Billy Jack Wills and Jimmie Rivers & the Cherokees) displayed outstanding jazz chops, and Tom Morrell & the Time-Warp Tophands continued the tradition. More recently Paul Franklin has tackled Sonny Rollins bop, and Greg Leisz has been featured in Charles Lloyd's ensemble.

A multi-instrumentalist with banjo, accordion, upright bass, and uke just part of her arsenal, Sinclair immersed herself in steel guitar and moved to Austin in 2012, where she spent five years playing honky-tonk behind Wayne "The Train" Hancock.

Fronting a sextet featuring Mike McGurk's vibraphone, Sinclair mixes bossa-nova favorites by Antonio Carlos Jobim with Wes Montgomery on her '61 Fender Stringmaster D-8 (its two eight-string necks tuned A6 and E13). Her intonation is impeccable, and most of all she swings. Even "Misty" gets new life; when she slides into the familiar three-chord intro, the effect is like a warm audio embrace. The good news is there's a vast reservoir to channel for future projects.

When it's all said and done, I defer again to the Duke. "It is becoming increasingly difficult to decide where jazz starts or where it stops, where Tin Pan Alley begins and jazz ends, or even where the border lies between classical music and jazz. I feel there is no boundary line."

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Rose Sinclair: Chuck Interrante.

Trevor Rabin

If this isn't consummate blues guitar, it's damn close. – ***Dan Forte***

Trevor Rabin
Rio

The first vocal album in 34 years from the former Yes guitarist (there was a killer instrumental CD in 2012 called *Jacaranda*) maintains the idiosyncratic panache and harmonic earmarks heard on several Yes albums and his film soundtracks for *Armageddon*, *National Treasure*, and *Con Air*.

Playing all instruments except drums (which are handled by longtime sideman Lou Molino), *Rio* is laden with crashing power chords, upside-down guitar licks, and melodies that stick to the ribs.

The first single, "Big Mistakes," has acoustic guitar confronting staccato electric lines, merging with piano, synthesizer, orchestral flourishes. Super-duper soloing highlights the ambitious "Push," and Rabin whips out the steel-string for Di Meola-like flourishes on "Oklahoma," while "Thandi" shows that an orchestra leader like Rabin can truly shred. On "Goodbye," he puts on his cowboy hat and goes full hoedown with country pull-offs.

Throughout the album, we witness technology at the mercy of Rabin's strong musical ideas, blissfully not the other way around. By the time listeners reach the odd-time-signature vocal stacking of "Egoli" and severe acoustic and electric work out of "Toxic," it's time to stop listening – and start practicing. – ***Oscar Jordan***

The Replacements
Tim: Let It Bleed Edition

The Mats once released a live cassette entitled *The Sh*t Hits the Fans*, but when it comes to deluxe editions, they do not disappoint. This boxed set of their 1985 major-label Sire/Warner Brothers LP is chock full – four CDs and one LP with a remastering of the original *Tim*, a new mix by producer/engineer Ed Stasium (Ramones, Talking Heads), a collection of previously unheard tracks, and a live show from '86.

In the new mix, classic tracks "Bastards Of Young" and "Left Of The Dial" never sounded better; Paul Westerberg and Bob Stinson's guitars are as in-your-face as the band could ever dream. And the plaintive "Here Comes A Regular" sounds even more intimate and haunting.

But the stunners here are the outtakes. A series of early tracks cut in Minneapolis with spiritual godfather Alex Chilton, they are revelatory. And the various versions of fan fave "Can't Hardly Wait" lend insight on Westerberg's creative process. The January 11, 1986, show at Chicago's Cabaret Metro provides the perfect finale, with the band roaring through old and new cuts, from Kiss' "Black Diamond" to an arch version of "Jumpin' Jack Flash" that almost makes the song their own. – ***Michael Dregni***

John Scofield
Uncle John's Band

Cue up the title cut and admire John Scofield's chord-melody approach to the Grateful Dead's 1971 FM hit. While Sco' has previously worked in the Dead universe (with bassist Phil Lesh), this is a straight-jazz approach with spartan bass and drum accompaniment.

Uncle John's Band is not a full album of jazzy Garcia/Weir covers (which would be welcomed at some point – *hint!*). Instead, it's a two-CD set with covers of Bob Dylan, Neil Young, and Miles Davis, plus Scofield originals.

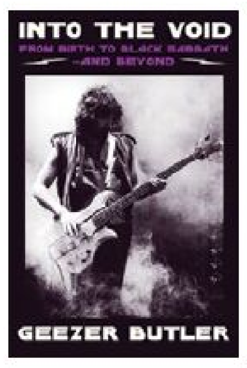
On "Mr. Tambourine Man," the New York fusioneer deploys a looper for atmospherics, delivering improv before hitting that nostalgic melody (which, in 1965, made an impression upon 13-year-old John). Now 72 himself, Sco's take on Neil Young's "Old Man" has added poignance, part of the *Harvest* album that came out when he was 20 years old – looking back from this moment, his soloing sums up his own half-century in music. Vicente Archer

Trevor Rabin: Hristo Shindov.

extra EXTRA

JOAN OSBORNE
Nobody Owns You

One of the greatest vocalists for 30 years, Osborne is still going strong, collaborating with longtime guitarist Jack Petruzzelli and producer/guitarist Ben Rice. Petruzzelli's baritone lays down the riff in the anthemic "Woman's Work," while Cindy Cashdollar's steel lifts "I Should've Danced More." It's short on solos, but long on musicianship, each player an expert at playing for the song. *– DF*

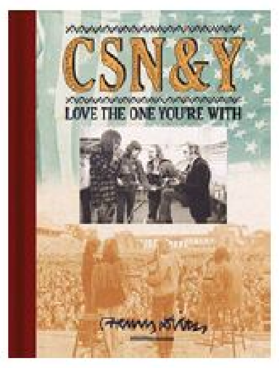


GEEZER BUTLER
Into the Void: From Birth to Black Sabbath - And Beyond

In his autobiography, the influential bassist/lyricist jumps into Sabbath's hardscrabble pre-fame years, mass success – and perhaps greater excesses. Management problems, and highs and lows with Ozzy Osbourne and Ronnie James Dio, are explained. The vegan owns about 80 basses (mostly custom Laklands) and also plays guitar – yet was too intimidated by Tony Iommi to present musical ideas that way. *– BA*

GRAHAM PARKER & THE GOLDTOPS
Last Chance To Learn The Twist

Graham Parker & the Rumor was lumped into '70s New Wave, but the frontman grew into a mature, eclectic talent. He's a soul singer at heart ("Wicked Wit"), intense sometimes ("The Music Of The Devil"), others playful ("Them Bugs"). His guitarist since The Rumour era – ex-Ducks Deluxe pub-rocker Martin Belmont – delivers a tasteful solo on "Sun Valley" and muted reverb on "Pablo's Hippos." *– DF*



HENRY DILTZ
CSN&Y: Love the One You're With

In this book, photographer Diltz offers a peek into the Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young saga. There are tales of the quartet hanging in Laurel Canyon, plus pics of Crosby's 12-string archtops and the bountiful Gretsch and Martin guitars of Stills and Young. Other photos take us backstage, into the studio, and onstage for both Woodstock and the '74 reunion tour. Lavishly packaged. *– PP*

TYLER CHILDERS
Rustin' in the Rain

Childers' latest features the hit single "In Your Love," which is about as far as you can get from Jason Aldean country. But it's cuts like the raging title track and "Percheron Mules" that wow with solos from his backing band, the Food Stamps, featuring James Barker on pedal steel and guitarists C.J. Cain and Jesse Wells (who also plays a mean fiddle). *– MD*

JOE BONAMASSA
Blues Deluxe Vol. 2

Twenty years later, *Blues Deluxe Vol 2* has arrived. Eight covers and two originals display the results of two decades of heartbreak, successes, and the Kryptonian blues licks that made Mr. B. a famous man. He leans into Peter Green's "Lazy Poker Blues" with conviction and is joined by Kirk Fletcher and Josh Smith on the jubilant "The Truth Hurts." *– OJ*

CARL VERHEYEN
Riverboat Sky

The guitarist's 17th album combines passionate musicality with spellbinding virtuosity. The Supertramp sideman's ebullient brand of rock and roll is saturated with advanced blues and chicken-fried guitar lines draped in tone for days. Highlights include a duet with Sophia James (from "American Idol") on the title track and a heartfelt cover of Jackson Brown's "Jamaica Say You Will." *– OJ*

GHALIA VOLT
Shout, Sister, Shout!

Volt's sultry voice and raw, snarling picking creates a blues-rockabilly hybrid that retains its power and excitement on every track. She rips through the rocker "Can't Afford to Die" and invokes her slide playing on the Delta stomper "No Happy Home" with ease, guitar and voice in total sync. Her playing on "Can't Have It All" is incandescent and bracing. *– RK*

SHERYL BAILEY
Homage

Jazzer Sheryl Bailey gives thanks to those who propelled her artistry; "The Velvet Hammer" pays tribute to Pat Martino, while "A Fine Vine" is an homage to Mike Stern, "Open Sesame" is a nod to saxman Joe Henderson, and "The Search For New Light" honors keyboard hero Chick Corea. Bailey swings with lustrous voice-leading, effortless soloing and comping, and imaginative improvisations. *– OJ*

THE HOWDIES
Howdies All Around

Their impressionistic takes on classic and outlaw country are restrained, yet lead guitarist/lead singer Shoni Rancher, guitarist Rob Hibs, and pedal-steel man Tyler Key add tasty instrumental flavor to "The Devil's Slide" and "Buddies," homage to Buddy Holly's late-'50s friendship with Waylon Jennings. Key's steel appears in the right places. Case in point: "Twilight on the Plains." *– RK*

FLEETWOOD MAC
Rumours Live

The Mac was at its zenith in 1977; *Rumours* had just dropped and the band was touring the world, including three nights at L.A.'s Forum. This recently-found recording tags all their hits — "Rhiannon" bewitches with more than eight minutes of jamming. The standout is Lindsey Buckingham's scorching version of Peter Green's 1969 Mac epic, "Oh Well." *– MD*

BARK
Loud

This DIY duo consists of drums, vocals – and groovy Fender Bass VI. "Love Minus Action" rides on Tim Lee's punchy, fuzzed six-string bass, while "Radar LUV" sports quirky lyrics and low-end lines primed for college radio. With Sue Bauer Lee on drums, Bark whips up infectious garage rock (dig the B-52s vibe of "Rock Club"), all drenched in timeless Bass VI twang. *– PP*

Lance Lopez

also takes a memorable upright-bass solo, directly quoting Young's vocal melody.

Switching back to standards, the threesome swings on Miles' 1949 cool-jazz landmark "Budo" for all its worth. It's glorious – and another high point on this keeper of a Scofield project. **– *Pete Prown***

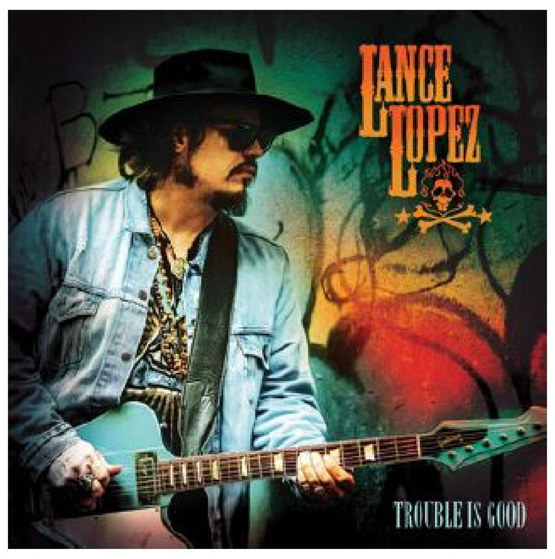
Steve Miller Band
J50: The Evolution of The Joker

Miller's beloved eighth album was recorded and mixed in 17 days, culminating in a jumble of rock, pop, R&B, and blues tracks – plus originals and covers, studio and live cuts. Yet it sold one million copies and its quirky title track went to #1.

This 50th-anniversary reissue – two CDs *or* three LPs, plus a 7" single – takes the box set a step further. Featuring 27 never-before-heard recordings (including eight unreleased songs), the collection opens with six early songs Miller performed in '72 on 12-string acoustic, most notably "Space Cowboy" and "Nothing Lasts." Two "pre" versions of "Shu Ba Da Du Ma Ma Ma Ma" include "Hat," an aggressive '71 live jam that sounds like hard-rock Santana, and "White Elephant," a moody '73 studio rehearsal with Steve's plaintive guitar soloing.

Miller provides audio commentary, talking about the demos, studio rehearsals, and live recordings, leading into the final/album versions. His liner-notes essay offers further recording and guitar details.

As for understanding the uncanny hit, "The Joker," it remains a mystery 50 years later, thanks to nonsensical lyrics, laid-back acoustic pickin', and that signature wah/slide lick. Just file it under "The Pompatus of Love." **– *BA***



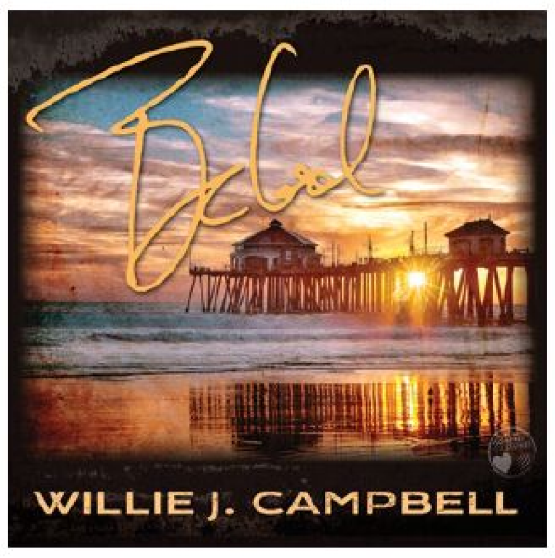
Lance Lopez
Trouble Is Good

Several years after being liberated from Supersonic Blues Machine, Lance Lopez is back and better than ever. Wielding hard lessons from the road and the influence of players named Billy, Jimi, and B.B., his latest album, *Trouble is Good*, is wild, blistering, and hellacious. As proof, he rips holy hell on slide guitar during the opening track, "Easy To Leave," showing that Shreveport's favorite son is just getting warmed up.

On "Jam With Me," Lopez welcomes listeners on a euphoric blues-rock odyssey with help from his Gibson Firebird and veteran rock drummer Gregg Bissonette. A *schweet* bottleneck intro introduces the rockin' title track, while "Wild Country" shows that Lopez can slam with the best of them, fusing British rock and roll and Texas flamethrowers. On the anthemic "Take A Swing," he wails wah-style like a man possessed.

This is an album for extroverts, slowing down only for the crunchy ballad "Uncivil War," with Lopez reflecting on the state of the world, and the seven-minute mystical opus "Voyager: Sunrise, Voyager, I Am Ra."

Discerning blues-rock fan? Come and get it! **– *OJ***



Willie J. Campbell
Be Cool

In the months before his passing in December '22, blues bassist Willie Campbell (James Harman Band, Fabulous Thunderbirds, Mannish Boys) recorded his only album as leader – aware that amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) would take his life. He was 67. The result became a summit meeting with members and alumni of those bands, Los Lobos, the Crawl, the Mighty Flyers, and the Rockets lending support. The result is anything but mournful; rather, it's a celebration.

Campbell provided the low-end throughout, with guitar star Kid Ramos, drummer Jimi Bott, and keyboardist Brooks Milgate rounding out the core band, along with vocalist Brian Templeton, who penned half of the songs. On six numbers, a trio of Dallas' greatest six-stringers – Anson Funderburgh, Mike Morgan, and Shawn Pittman – takes over. Elsewhere, Joe Louis Walker takes the lead-guitar chair, Kim Wilson steps up for vocals and harmonica, and David Hidalgo sings. On "Drone," Jason Ricci verily blows the back out of his harp.

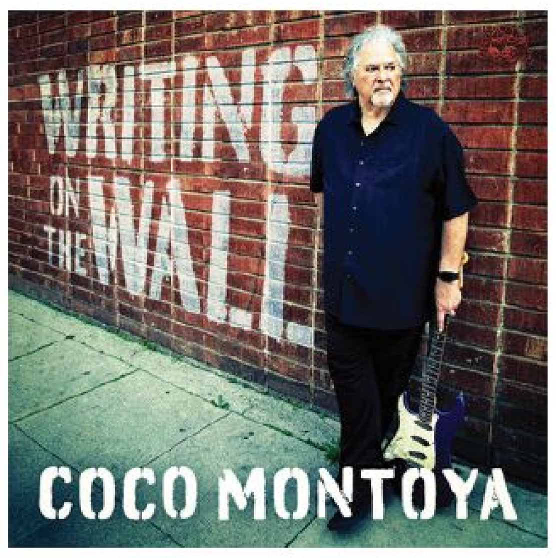
All stops are pulled out with a repertoire that swings here, pummels there. The set ends not with a dirge, but with Peter Green's beautiful instrumental, "Albatross." A fitting send-off to a man who dedicated his life to the music he loved. *– DF*

Little Feat
Sailin' Shoes Deluxe Edition
Dixie Chicken Deluxe Edition

One of the most influential outfits of the '70s, Little Feat was a powerhouse with guitarists Lowell George and Paul Barrere. *Sailin' Shoes*, from '72, finds the band still searching for a cohesive studio sound, though "Easy to Slip" is a flat-out rocker, and "Cold, Cold, Cold" shows the funk already in place. "Willin'" remains one of the finest folkie sing-alongs of the past 50 years. The section dubbed "Hotcakes, Outtakes, Rarities" adds 11 studio takes, plus 10 tracks from an L.A. concert.

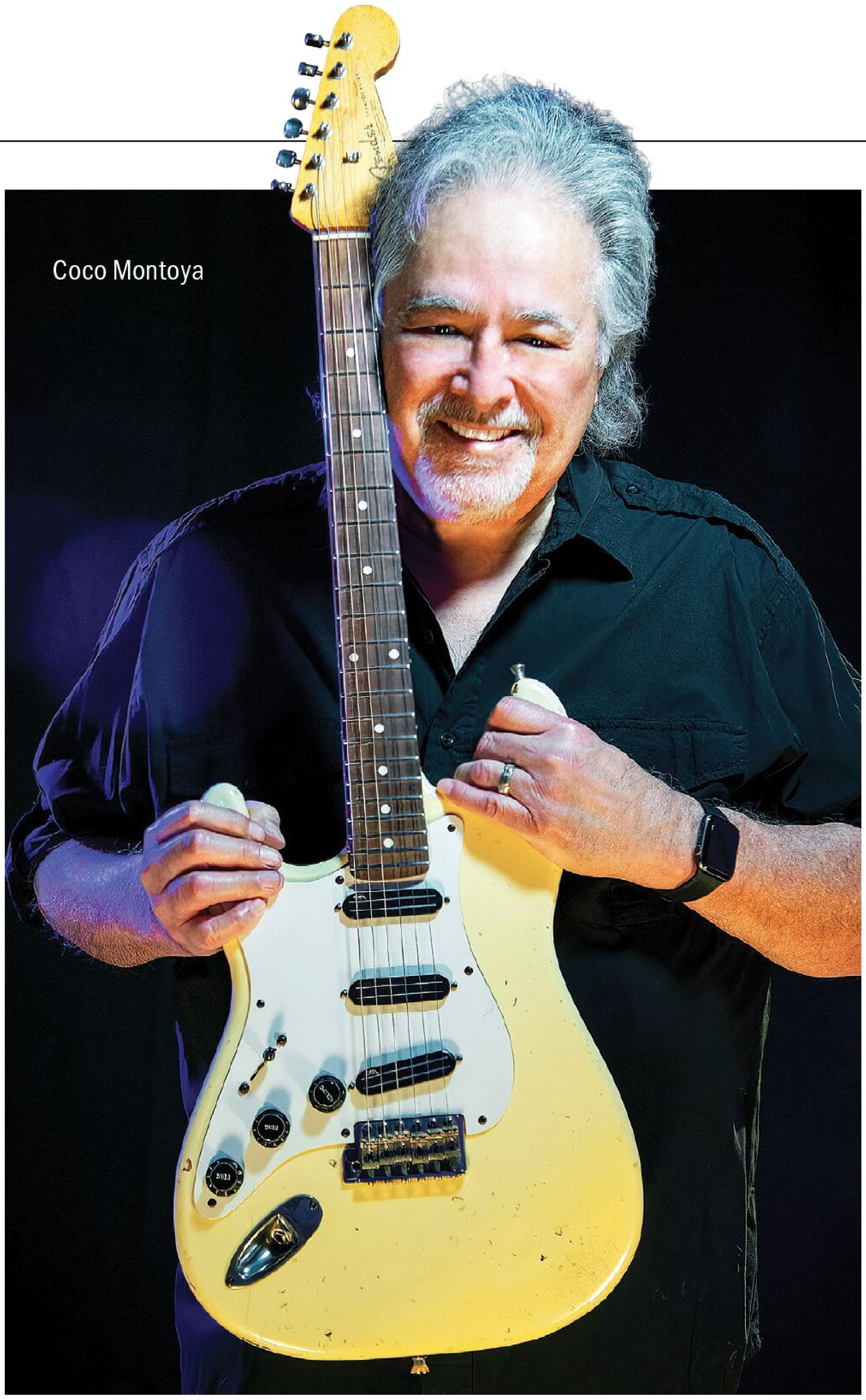
1973's *Dixie Chicken* is the Feat's best-known studio LP, a masterpiece of swampy funk and slide guitar. The audio quality displays quantum improvement over *Sailin' Shoes*, as heard on "Two Trains." A glorious demo of "Fat Man in a Bathtub" is economical on the order of the Black Keys, while a half-dozen live cuts from a '73 Boston show include the altered blues of "On Your Way Down," sporting Barrere's fuzzy (and seriously underrated) Strat under George's slide. "Walkin' All Night" is a firecracker, reaffirming their explosiveness onstage.

Well-curated, this pair of reissues supplement the remastered tracks with freshly unearthed material – but not overwhelmingly. Rather, it's just enough to remind us of Little Feat's once-in-a-generation brilliance. *– PP*



Coco Montoya
Writing on the Wall

Since his debut album in 1995, Coco Montoya – who cut his teeth with fellow southpaw Albert Collins and John Mayall – built a reputation marked by skill and feel. His ninth album was recorded with his touring band and a few guests. The result is 13 tracks featuring powerful vocals and rip-roaring, incandescent virtuosity, refreshingly free of slick, mechanical "hot" licks.


Coco Montoya

Montoya's vocal and instrumental intensity explode on the first track, the intense, minor-key "I Was Wrong," displaying clear echoes of Otis Rush. Along with singer/guitarist Ronnie Baker Brooks, he makes short work of the shuffle "Baby, You're A Drag." On "A Chip and a Chair," Lee Roy Parnell adds cutting slide that complements Montoya's performance. Even his brief licks between vocals on "(I'd Rather Feel) Bad About Doin' It" stand out. More burning intensity explodes on the R&B-inspired "Save It For the Next Fool."

That mastery extends to his hell-for-leather treatment of Bobby Bland's "You Got Me (Where You Want Me)" and Lonnie Mack's ballad "Stop," marked by a bracing vocal and snarling solo. "The Three Kings and Me," an homage to B.B., Freddie and Albert, essentially summarizes this riveting, satisfying album – a statement of Montoya's mastery and that timeless, unbroken circle of the blues. *– RK*

Various artists
The Alligator Christmas Collection

First released in 1992, this cornucopia of blues is now on red vinyl, celebrating the spirit of the season. The opener sets the tone, the late Koko Taylor singing "Merry, Merry Christmas" with Criss Johnson's stinging lead guitar over the chords of Calvin Louden. Lil' Ed & The Blues Imperials deliver a fierce "I'm Your Santa," combining Ed's slide (his uncle was none other than bottleneck hero J.B. Hutto) with the expert guitar of Mike Garrett. In "Santa Claus Wants Some Lovin'," Tinsley Ellis gives the gift of funky licks in the spirit of Jeff Beck.

The slow blues "Lonesome Christmas" finds Son Seals dropping hot, smokey runs down the chimney, while for heavy chorus effects, Lonnie Brooks' "Christmas on the Bayou" is spicier than a plate of New Orleans shrimp. Little Charlie & The Nightcats swing some West Coast blues on "Santa Claus," heavy on harp and 9th-chord guitar fills.

For a welcome change-up, Elvin Bishop brings an instrumental "The Little Drummer Boy," playing melody on bottleneck and harmonizing it like a chorus of angels.

In all, *The Alligator Christmas Collection* delivers just what its title promises – a festive gathering of Yuletide blues. *– PP* **VG**

Coco Montoya: Victoria Smith.

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INSTRUMENTS FOR SALE

1937 Martin 0-18 T - shaded top - museum quality and the best sounding tenor I've ever played. OHSC. $9.500.00 Buyer pays insured shipping from Northern Ca. info@vintageinstruments.com

Gibson ES-335 TDC original owner, purchased in 1969, has an "8" in the serial number (1968 or 1969?) original hard case $10K, free shipping in the USA, very good condition have plenty of pics. steviegeetar5@yahoo.com

1967 Fender Telecaster: Ash body, Nitro blond finish, Maple neck stamped 3 APR 67 in EXC cond. orig frets w/ plenty of life. The p.u.s=orig blue-yellow cloth wired 5.1k/ea. tuners orig Klusons, not "F" CBS tuners, 7.2 lbs, non-orig. pots and switch, control plate etched with owner's Ca. drivers lic. A dream to play in collector shape! $16,000 with OHSC. No trades. email: info@3tracksmusic.com

1938 Oahu Lap Slide Combo Time Capsule, asking $1,250 net to me. Or $1,150 cash and carry! San Diego area. Early Electric Lap slide, amp, and matching case with sheet music! All in Ex condition. Call or text, 928-525-1189 Also Listed on Acoustic Guitar Forum (Guitars44me)

1968 Gibson Johnny Smith, Tabacco Sunburst. Guitar has had re-fret, bone nut and new pickguard installed; all else is original. A players guitar (some scratches and small dents). Projects well acoustically. Neck demensions are: 1 3/4 nut, 1st fret depth .91 , 10th fret .1.01 inches. OHSC included. Asking $7,800.00. Mike (203) 520-9003 mwoolen@snet.net

1953 Gibson ES-175 Natural. Unusually excellent condition for this age. Single P90. Contact me at petecar@aol.com for photos and detailed description. Asking $9,000 plus shipping or local pickup in SF Bay Area.

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www.RivingtonGuitars.com

Burst with block inlays https://glguitars.com/product/doheny-2/ 1395.+ shipping & insurance garyphoto@earthlink.net

1957 Fender Stratocaster with case and 1957/1958 Bandmaster recently purchased from the original owner. All original and in very good condition. $55,000.00. Local pick-up only in Pendleton, South Carolina. Contact Michael at msmithscr@gmail.com or 864-444-8355

1983 Fender Precision Gold Elite II Bass, excellent condition, all original, nicely yellowed white finish w/OHSC. Serial #G021553, $3250.

Call 505-459-4480 for info or pix. Buyer pays shipping

INSTRUMENTS WANTED

Steve Vai and Joe Satriani guitars. Collector buying multicolor Jems, Universe models and JS guitars with graphics. Also buying vintage USA B.C. Rich, Jackson, Charvel, and Performance guitars. Quick, easy deals. brett8388@gmail.com

Hoping to find my 1971walnut SG Standard. Serial# 962917 Bought in Pittsburgh Pa. 1972 at Lomakin Music. If you have it please contact Tom email tguard12@comcast.net

Vox V246 phantom stereo 12 string guitar in any condition. 1-206-913-2837 or b.brinkley@comcast.net

AMPS FOR SALE

Fender Vibrolux 1965, mint, original speakers, updated caps $4,800 Firm. Fender Princeton Reverb 1966, original speaker, updated caps, $3,000 firm. Local pickup only within 75 mile radius near Boston, MA. no shipping. info@avpvideo.com

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1967 Fender Twin Reverb. Very Good condition. Original Altec 417B speakers. Recently serviced. New power tubes. Local pickup is preferred. $3,600 (864) 494-6761 coppes@bellsouth.net

1964 Princeton Tuxedo amp. All original, good condition. $2,300 plus shipping. tfoguitars@yahoo.com in the Nashville area.

MISC FOR SALE

Glen Anderson has just released his new CD - "Don't Look Back" from Houndogrecords. It is currently available on itunes, spotify and all media outlets. Glen has 3 previous CDs including "The Big Show, Let's Pretend", and "Reverend". Also, check out his book, "Classic Performances (from the Golden Age of Rock & Roll)" on his website, or via blurb.com You can also hear it at glenanderson@hearnow.com

These secret weapons Let you "Squeeze" More performance from your Stratocaster or Telecaster. Get Several Dozen new Blues, Jazz, Metal, Surf, Country, tin-canny pickup tones. Makes your guitar the ultimate performer - Guaranteed! Customer said, "I stayed up all night playing my upgraded guitar." Check out our PROteus SSSS Strat upgrade that gives you 102 pickup tones. AweSome-Guitars.com

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MISC WANTED

Vintage Martin Tenor Guitar with "Buddy Koch" inlaid in pearl at 12th fret. This is a family treasure that was lost decades ago. Would love to have it again. Willing to pay. Please contact me if you have this instrument or know someone who does. wjkoch1@yahoo.com

"Harmony, The People's Guitar," 340 color and b/w photos in a 176 page book on Harmony guitars and Co. From the Author. $32 + $8 media mail. 631-765-3770 Ron@rothguitar.com

DEALERS

Bluesboy Jag Box Guitars. Over 4,000 Sold Since 2004. Makes an excellent gift! 1,2,3,4,6 strings, dog bowl resonators, acoustic electric, many designs and styles, humbucker, single coil Web store: https://jagshouse.com/cigarbox-guitars.html YouTube channel: @Bluesboy-JagCigarBoxGuitars

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BUILDERS

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STOLEN INSTRUMENTS

Still searching for stolen Sunburst '57 Reissue Stratocaster #V010258. Guitar was stolen 6/4/94 in Denver, CO can be positively identified. Kevin 303-946-2458

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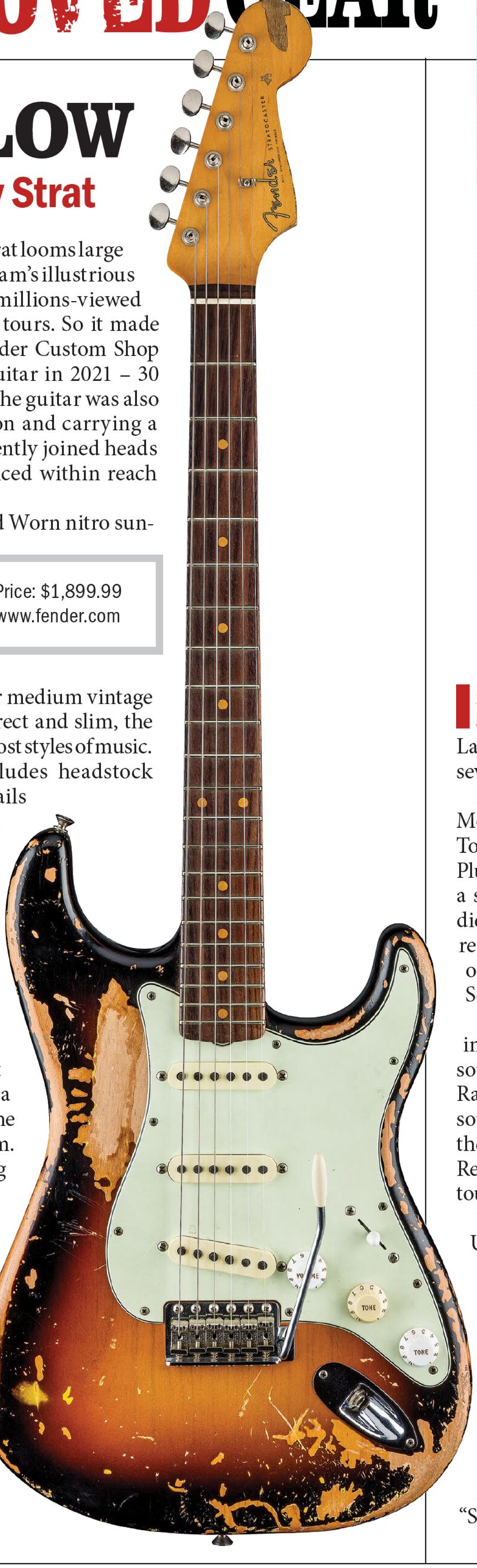
VG APPROVED GEAR

EVENER FLOW

Fender's Mike McCready Strat



Mike McCready's beat up sunburst '60s Strat looms large in the history of grunge; heard on Pearl Jam's illustrious body of recorded work and seen in the band's millions-viewed videos, it was also a key player on countless tours. So it made sense when McCready teamed with the Fender Custom Shop to offer a ding-for-ding re-creation of the guitar in 2021 – 30 years after Ten. And while it was cool as hell, the guitar was also ungettable for most, being limited production and carrying a price tag of $15,000. Fortunately, they've recently joined heads again to offer a made-in-Mexico version priced within reach of the masses.

Sporting an alder body with massively Road Worn nitro sunburst finish, the new McCready Strat is *gorgeous*. Its slim C-shaped maple neck also gets the treatment, making it smooth, comfortable, and feeling like it's been played for 60 years (minus the grime). The slab-rosewood fretboard has slightly flat 9.5" radius and sports 21 Jescar medium vintage frets along with dot inlays. While period correct and slim, the circumference and feel will easily translate to most styles of music.

Price: $1,899.99
www.fender.com

Further beautifully replicated wear includes headstock damage from an onstage accident. Other details include a vintage-style Strat vibrato, bent-steel saddles, a cold-rolled steel block, aged Tone knob, and McCready's autograph on the back of the head.

Voiced to replicate the sound of McCready's original, the custom pickups get his thumbs-up by producing warm, articulate tone that – as '60s Strats were so often called on to do – create sounds flexible enough for a variety of genres.

Plugged into a Bassman and an assortment of pedals, the McCready proved itself to be a true performer's axe with no fight and all the period-correct sounds, including 60-cycle hum. Welcoming whammy abuse while holding tune, it happily went full-blown Hendrix, SRV, or Ernie Isley, and the clean tones were mellifluous, clear, and bell-like; the neck pickup like butter. A light guitar, it radiates old-school '60s flavor and resonates with an open-sounding woodiness not found in many current Strats.

The Mike McCready Stratocaster is a faithful re-creation of a grunge-rock icon. Pearl Jam's discography aside, it can go from rude to sexy with the kind of craftsmanship and attention to detail that makes performing the pleasurable experience it ought to be. ***– Oscar Jordan***

Price: $315
www.drybell.com

COMPRESS YOURSELF

The DryBell Module 4

Inspired by the Dan Armstrong Orange Squeezer, Drybell Musical Electronic Laboratory's Module 4 Compressor adds several highly usable features.

Running on a 9-volt adapter, the Module 4 allows users to control Output, Tone, Blend, Attack, Release, and Preamp. Plugged in between a Bassman clone and a superstrat, the controls on our tester did amazing things to sculpt squish and resonance while allowing the essence of the guitar to shine through; Orange Squeezer Mode was especially on point.

Musical, warm, and vintage-sounding, users will find Steely Dan-adjacent sounds, and while the Full Frequency Range Mode yields a brighter, clearer sound, perky funk tones can be had in the vein of Nile Rodgers and Prince. Regardless of settings, the Mode 4 delivers touch-sensitivity and responsiveness.

Tone shaping? Boost? Sustain? Oh, yeah! Users can fashion a variety of sounds with options for brightness, lows, and sparkle, with variable amounts of boost for funk etudes or velvet soloing. True or buffered bypass are options, and presets can be saved.

Regardless of pickups, the Module 4 works wonderfully with dirt boxes or by itself to get that tight, punchy sound made famous by Lowell George, Mark Knopfler, and Jeff "Skunk" Baxter. ***– Oscar Jordan***

U.K. THREE-SPEED

The Tone King Royalist MKIII

British tube amps from the mid '60s and early '70s have inspired countless designs emulating their beloved tones. In 2014, Tone King Amplifier Company launched the Royalist, its take on the famed Marshall JTM45/JMP50 "Bluesbreaker." In '16, the Royalist MKII brought a change from EL84 to EL34/6L6GC/KT66 power tubes and a unique 6V6GT screen regulator. To mark the company's 30th anniversary, it has introduced the MKIII.

We plugged into the 1x12 combo version of the two-channel/40-watt non-Master-Volume amp, with footswitchable channels that share a tone stack with Bass, Mid, Treble and Presence. Independent controls for each channel include three-way toggles that switch between era voicings labeled "1964," "1967," and "1970."

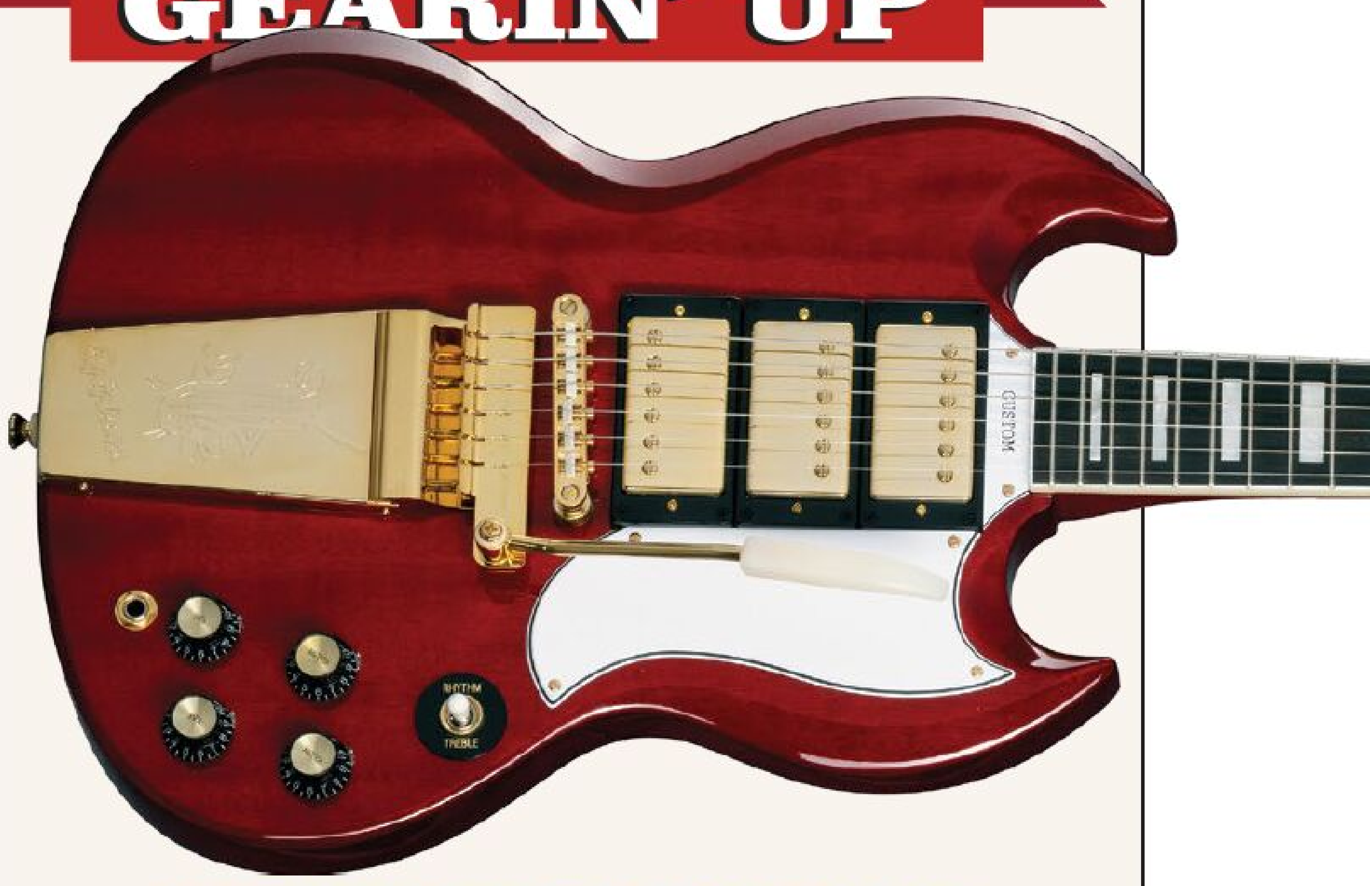
The Royalist's non-master design means overdrive and distortion are generated by turning up its Volume control. With Bass and Mids at 5, Treble and Presence at 7, the 1964 voicing helped our Les Paul and Telecaster produce fat, smooth, low-medium gain tones hinting at a JTM45. The more-aggressive 1967 setting yielded more treble and gain, similar to a classic plexi sound, and the 1970 "Super Lead" voice brought the highest gain with more sustain, treble, punch, and low-end tightness. The MKIII's ability to emulate three classic tones with the flick of a switch is impressive, and dialing them to taste was easy with the super-responsive Tone controls. Pull Fat (on each Volume pot) changes feel by delivering more low-end frequencies on the first gain stage of the preamp, adding thickness for leads or to fatten single-coils.

The amp's two built-in/six-setting Iron Man II attenuators offer controls for each channel, replacing the single shared control on the MKII. It works well reducing room volume while still driving the tubes to their sweet spot, and the HF switch brightens tone when the attenuator is doing heavy lifting. Though the Royalist excels at dirty/overdriven tones, beautiful clean tones are remarkably easy to get within any of the voicings by simply easing pick attack or rolling down the guitar's Volume.

The Royalist MK III is an impressive British-flavored tone machine with the soul and DNA of revered Marshalls at your fingertips – at *any* volume. – ***Charlie Wilkins***

Price: $2,695
www.toneking.com

GEARIN' UP



EPIPHONE JOE BONAMASSA 1963 SG CUSTOM
Epiphone's Joe Bonamassa 1963 SG Custom has a contoured neck-heel joint and Dark Wine Red finish to honor the original. Other features include Maestro Vibrola, gold-plated hardware, and three Epiphone ProBucker pickups.

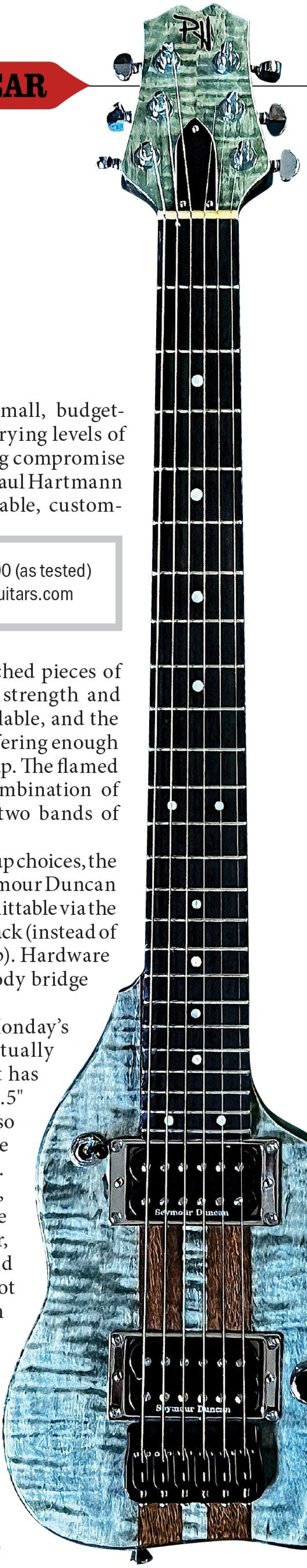
GIBSON LES PAUL SUPREME
Gibson's Les Paul Supreme has a maple top on a mahogany body, mahogany neck, ebony fretboard with compound radius, contoured neck heel, Burstbucker Pro pickups at the neck and middle, Burstbucker Pro+ near the bridge, coil-tap Volume pots, master Tone, nitrocellulose finish, and gold hardware.

GRETSCH STREAMLINER
Gretsch's Streamliner Center Block and Hollow Body guitars have BT-3S pickups with splittable coils, a soft-C neck profile, and a bone nut. The Center Block models have chambered bodies, and both styles are offered in an array of finishes.

VG APPROVED GEAR

TRAVEL TUNES

The Paul Hartmann Stormy Monday



The typical "travel guitar" is a small, budget-minded instrument that offers varying levels of construction and quality, often forcing compromise in playability and usefulness. Luthier Paul Hartmann takes a different route, offering portable, custom-made solidbodies as good as most full-sized instruments. The Stormy Monday is one of several variations.

Price: $1,500 (as tested)
www.phguitars.com

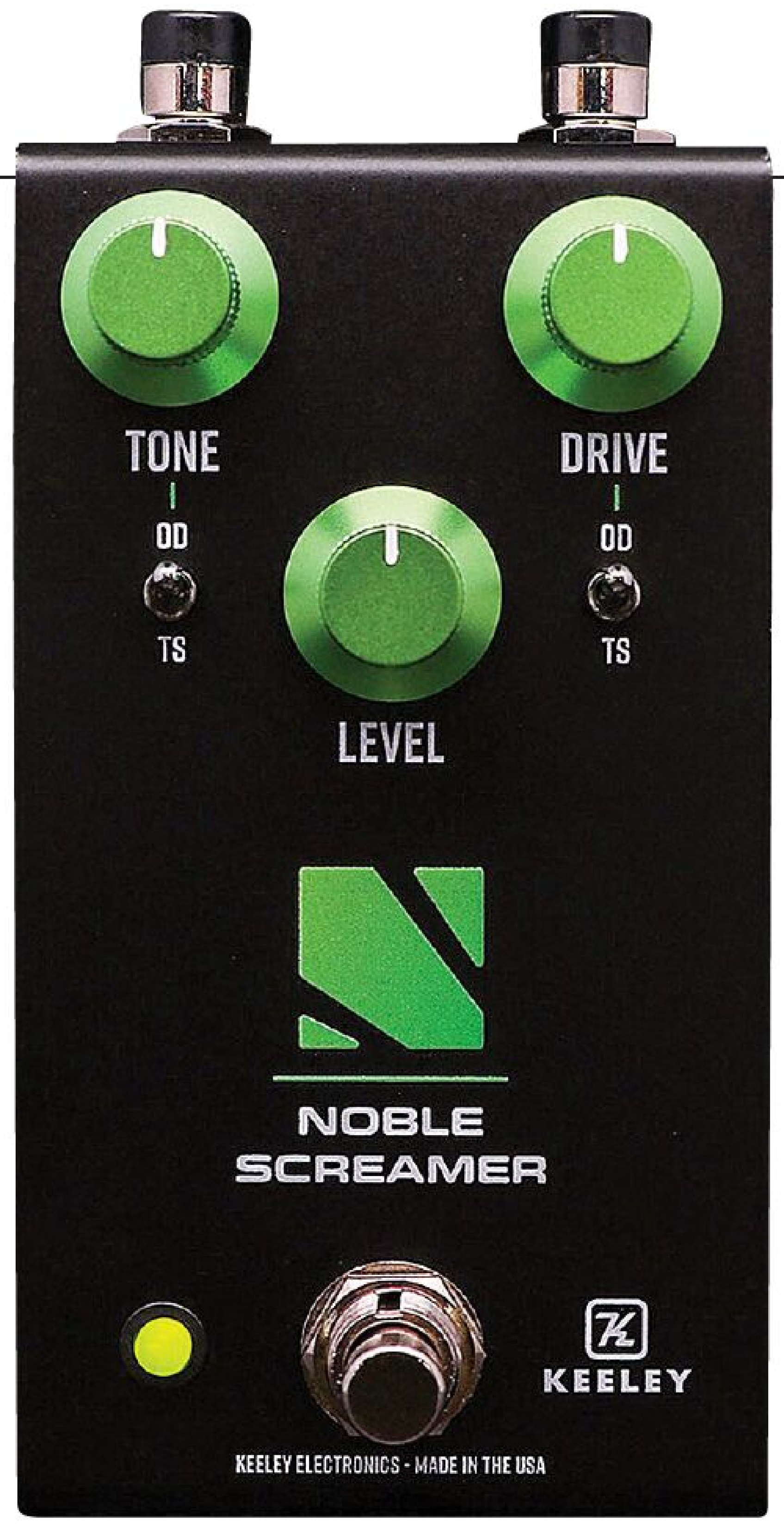
Using neck-through construction, our test guitar sandwiched pieces of mahogany (for tone) and maple (for strength and visual appeal). Bolt-on necks are available, and the body shape is small and functional, offering enough curves to rest it comfortably on your lap. The flamed top on the tester was a gorgeous combination of blue/green/gray-stained maple with two bands of chocolate-brown mahogany.

While Hartmann offers custom pickup choices, the tones on ours came courtesy of two Seymour Duncan Pearly Gates humbuckers, the bridge splittable via the push/push Volume pot near the input jack (instead of the usual spot below the bridge pickup). Hardware includes a Hipshot string-through-body bridge and Grover locking tuners.

The star of the show is the Stormy Monday's neck, which Hartmann says is virtually identical to a '70s Martin. In hand, it has an incredible-feeling carve with a 25.5" scale, 15" radius, and 24 frets. It may also remind you of a vintage Gibson profile with the way it *perfectly* sits in the palm.

Plugged into a tube Vox clone, digital sims, and a Boss Katana, the Stormy Monday was bright and clear, effortlessly cutting through the band at a jam session. The only debit is (not surprisingly) a bit of neck dive when played on a strap, but that goes with the small-body design.

In all, the Stormy Monday is a "wow" travel guitar with astonishing build quality and better playability than a lot of full-sized guitars. Plus, its looks are killer and it brings a full 24 frets. Better yet, it's a custom plank, so Hartmann will build one to your specs. – ***Pete Prown***



www.robertkeeley.com
Price: $199

ULTIMATE MASH-UP

The Keeley Noble Screamer

Just when guitarists thought the golden age of gear couldn't get better, Robert Keeley has combined two great pedals that sound great together.

One side of his new Noble Screamer OD/boost is inspired by the Nobels ODR-1, the other is a take on the Tube Screamer. Keeley calls it a "four-in-one pedal," almost like modeling but using a purely analog circuit.

Designed to be user-friendly, the Screamer's Tone, Level, and Drive knobs work with OD and TS toggle switches to control the temperament of gain, from flat-EQ to boosted treble and bass. In TS mode, the Tone knob acts as a low-pass filter that rolls off highs as Level is dialed up. It's easy to find settings for hard clipping, bite, and all-around nastiness – everything from buttery boosts to crusty crunch can be had with switchable bypass, powered by a 9- or 18-volt adapter.

Played through a Deluxe Reverb with a Les Paul Standard and custom Tele, the overdrive and boost selections (along with their mix options) produced everything from sweet Nashville punch to L.A. crazy. The Les Paul produced Santana-esque sustain, while the Tele went from twangy to super-thick and ominous, all while preserving the inherent character of the guitar and amp.

Keeley's Noble Screamer can mold, chisel, or tame – but more importantly, it inspires imaginative textures with highly usable coloration. – ***Oscar Jordan***

IN THE DETAILS

The Empress ParaEq MKII Deluxe and Heavy Menace

It's cliché to call a parametric EQ a "Swiss Army knife," but with Empress' updated ParaEq MKII Deluxe, the comparison fits elegantly.

If you've never tweaked a parametric EQ, it's different from the passive controls on most guitars, offering more-precise/powerful adjustment to specific frequencies/bands. The ParaEq Deluxe pedal has knobs labeled Low Freq, Mid Freq, and High Freq, along with controls for Gain (dB range of the cut or boost), Q (determines the center frequencies), and small knobs to massage the high/low filters and shelves. Surgical adjustment of EQ can be accomplished *without* the Boost footswitch engaged, but stomp on it and it'll sound like you swapped pickups or pushed an overdrive box ever further. If you're playing with a band and your tone just ain't happening, the ParaEq MKII Deluxe could be a lifesaver.

If you want to get down and dirty, the Heavy Menace is a fine choice. It may look like a distortion box – which it definitely is – but Empress expands on the acclaimed EQ from its original Heavy pedal to make this more. There are three channel settings – Lite(ish), Heavy, and Heavier, which goes from crunch to pure nastiness. The Weight knob shapes the low end's character to taste, while Mid Freq lets you add the detail to the dirt. The Gate Thresh knob accesses a built-in noise gate, which is a welcome high-volume feature.

Price: $349 (ParaEq MK II Deluxe); $249.99 (Heavy Menace)
www.empresseffects.com

Both Empress pedals are built like tanks and sport clean interfaces, but impress with their devotion to studio-grade EQ voices.

Whether you're jamming with a band or playing at home, the ParaEq MKII Deluxe lets you detail and sweeten your electric, amplified acoustic, or bass with precision, as well as providing a whopper of a boost (up to 30dB). It can also beat down feedback on an acoustic/electric, adding to its gig utility. – ***Pete Prown***

GEARIN' UP

STRYMON ULTRAVIOLET VINTAGE VIBE

Strymon's UltraViolet Vintage Vibe has controls for Speed, Intensity, and Volume, MIDI implementation with 300 pre-sets, USB-C connectivity, stereo in/out TRS jacks, rear-panel Mono/Stereo switch, discrete JFET input preamp, traditional Chorus and Vibrato modes, and Blend for a 70/30 mix of dry and wet.

TECH 21 FRANK BELLO STREET DRIVER 48

Tech 21's Frank Bello Street Driver 48 SanAmp has a Dirt switch for adding gain and overdrive, Filth for top-end sizzle and clarity, and controls for Drive, Low, High, and Level. It runs on a 9-volt power supply with interchangeable plugs and has $^1/_4$" and XLR outputs.

UNIVERSAL AUDIO OX STOMP

Universal Audio's OX Stomp Dynamic Speaker Emulator models 22 speaker cabs, six vintage microphones, has reverb, delay, EQ, modulation, and can access 1,176 compression effects via the UAFX Control app. Its circuit has silent switching, buffered bypass, and analog dry-through capability.

Got something new and cool? Let us know at www.VintageGuitar.com/Gearin-Up-Submission

VG APPROVED GEAR

ROSEWOOD RENAISSANCE

Guild's D-50 Standard

With a tradition going back more than 70 years, Guild Guitars was there from the beginning of rock and roll, at the peak of folk, and through the Summer of Love. The company's instruments brought distinctive styling, and it boasted a distinguished roster of players.

In a nod to its past, Guild's refreshed versions of U.S.-made classic acoustics includes the new D-50 Standard.

Long a favorite of players from all genres, the D-50 marries a solid Sitka spruce top to rosewood back and sides. The Standard uses scalloped Adirondack-spruce bracing. Guild's Vintage Gloss finish is nitrocellulose the company says has qualities of both satin and gloss; indeed, it's smooth and close-pored, but with a subtle satiny surface. The result looks clean and sharp, but feels like it's had some of the shine played out of it. Sporting a 25⁵/₈" scale on its rosewood board, its open-back tuners are stylish, the white binding contrasts nicely with the gorgeous rosewood, and the back center stripe is a classic touch.

Price: $2,799 (Natural)
www.guildguitars.com

Fit and finish on our tester were exemplary, fret work was clean, and the nut had clearly been serviced by professional hands. Set up with medium-low action, it may not have been perfect for every player, but getting up and down the C-shaped neck was a joy. Though new (and thus a little stiff), it was nicely resonant and loud enough to play alongside seasoned cohorts, its tone noticeably mid-forward with restrained lows and pleasant-if-subdued highs. It's a fair assumption that once the guitar opens up, bass will expand and highs will ring brighter. Either way, it was a riot to play – the action was fast and the fretwork faultless. The only issue was enthusiastic strumming had to be dialed back to avoid fret rattle – a small price to pay if "fast and mean" is the modus operandi.

The big takeaway from the new D-50 is its great overall balance. This is a versatile box that should fit well in the hands of a variety of players. It looks like a standard-issue bluegrass cannon or a singer/songwriter companion, but its sonic potential is far broader. Offered in Natural and Antique Burst, its case has a built-in humidifier. Altogether, it's a package that's easy to appreciate. *– Michael Shirek*

Price: $180
www.xotic.us

IN YOUR FACE

Xotic's Bass BB Preamp V1.5

Sometimes, bassists need boost, too, like when that bass-solo interlude from Sade's "Smooth Operator" comes along and it's time to get busy.

This updated version of Xotic's Bass BB brings improved tone-shaping features with a variety of gain structures and up to 30dB boost; Variable Gain, Treble, Volume, and Bass controls grant players a fighting chance at low-end superiority. The pedal can run on the same 9-volt DC adapter as before (AC will fry it), but this time an 18-volt option yields cleaner headroom and improved dynamic response; the new top-end jack placement is a nice touch.

Running between a Fender Precision and a Gallien-Krueger Neo IV 2x12 combo, straight from the box, a big Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde personality shift was noticeable thanks to a beefier range of gain (or no gain) and several EQ options. Tweaking the Gain and Volume controls produced everything from kingly cleans to grinding grit – all dirt and no fuzz. From Motown to aggro to Yes single-note frequencies evolved into a bountiful buffet of bass badassery.

As an overdrive, the new BB doesn't compromise firm low-end or articulation. In all, it's an incredibly musical pedal that can add presence and definition to improve any bass rig. The white knobs are a nice new touch for visibility, and it's the perfect size for any pedalboard. *– Oscar Jordan* VG

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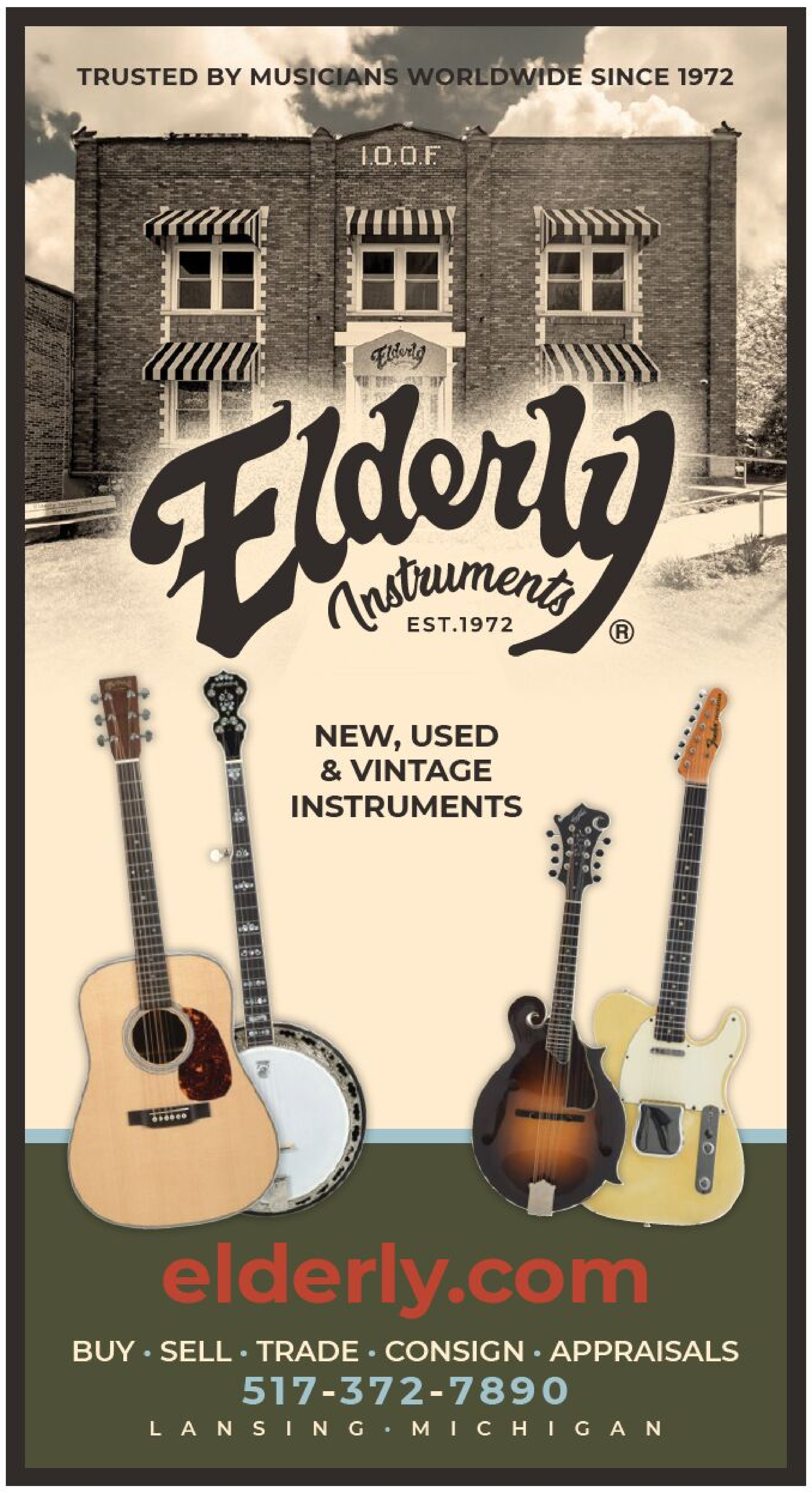
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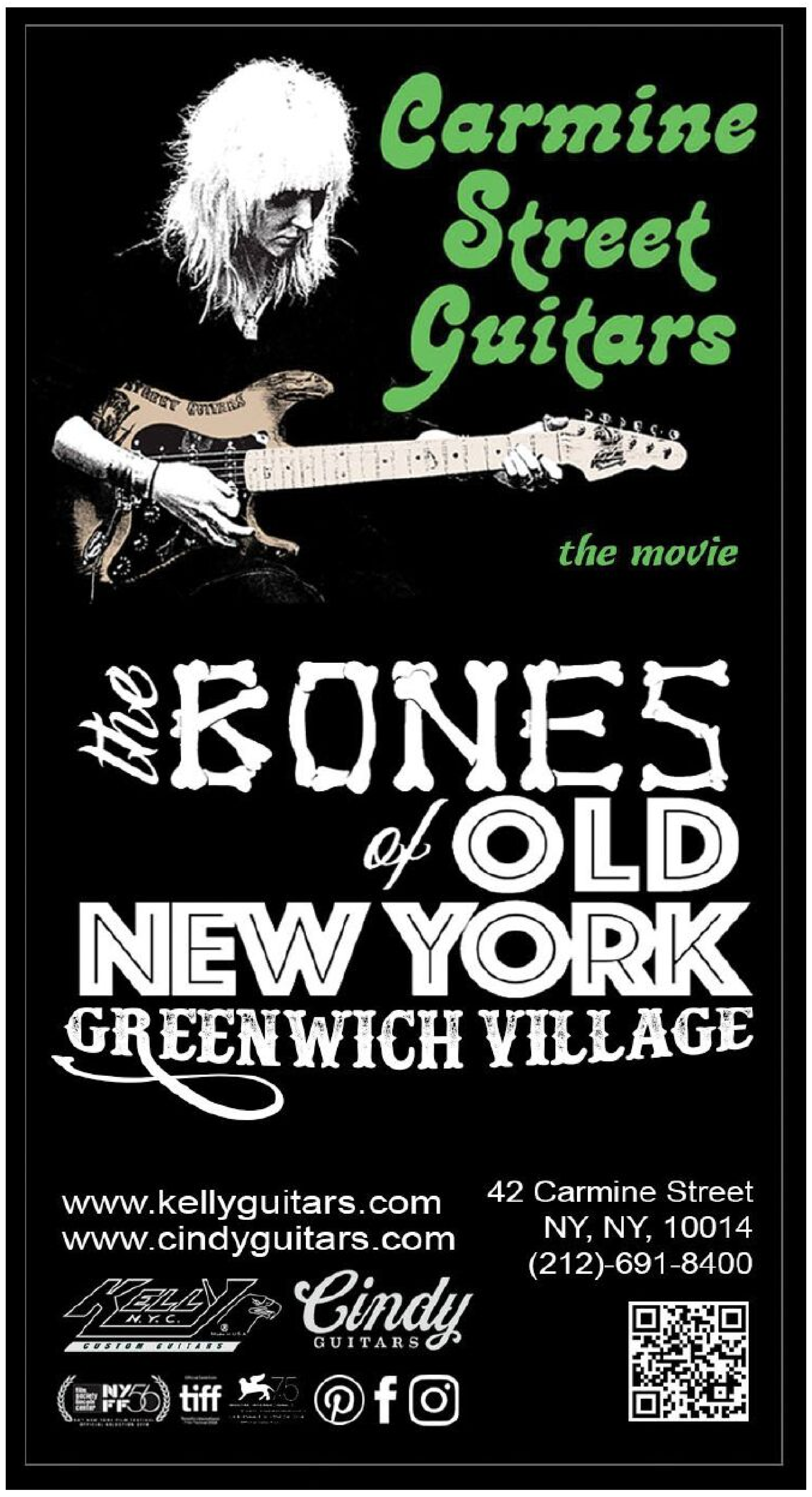
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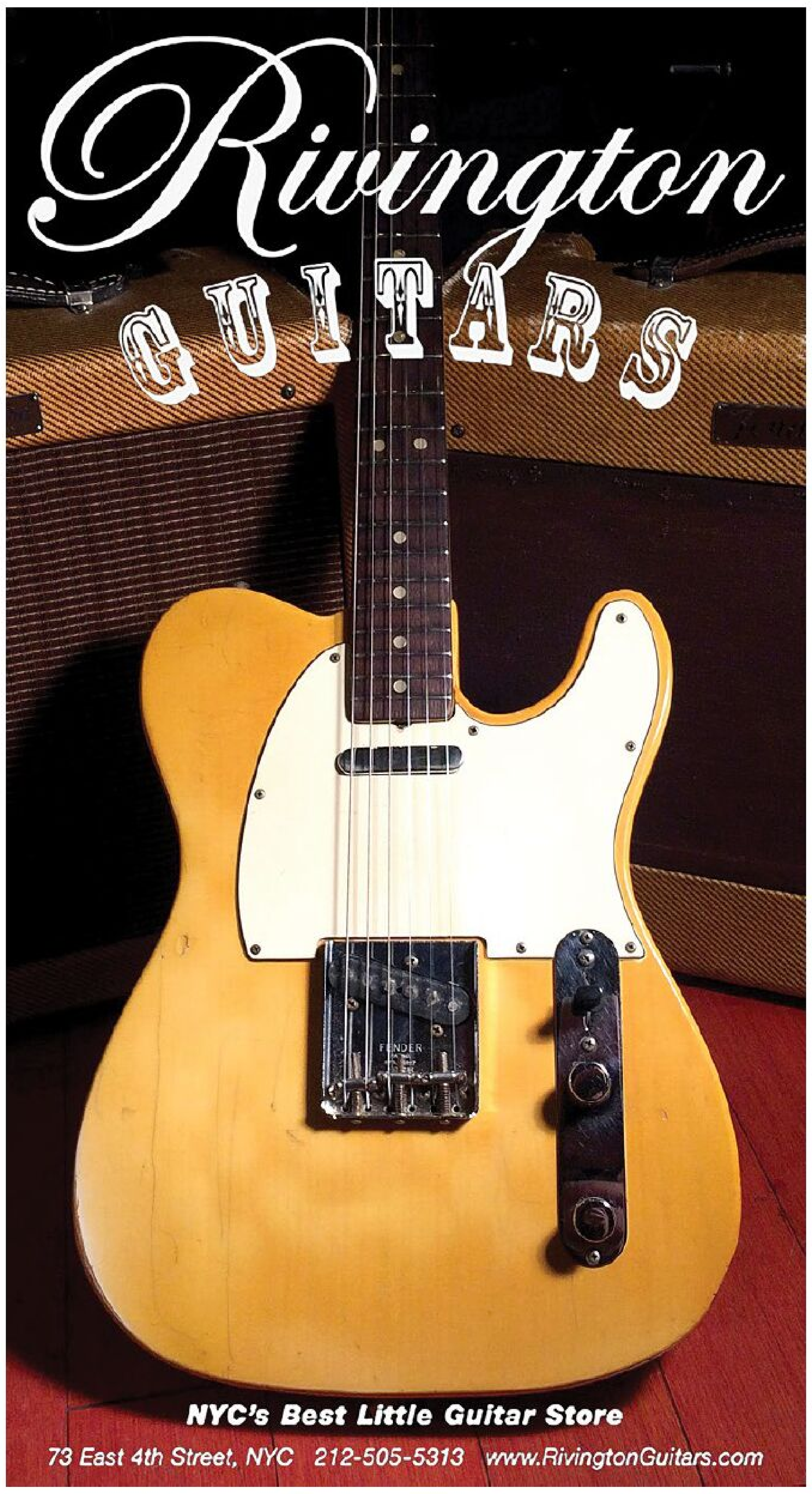
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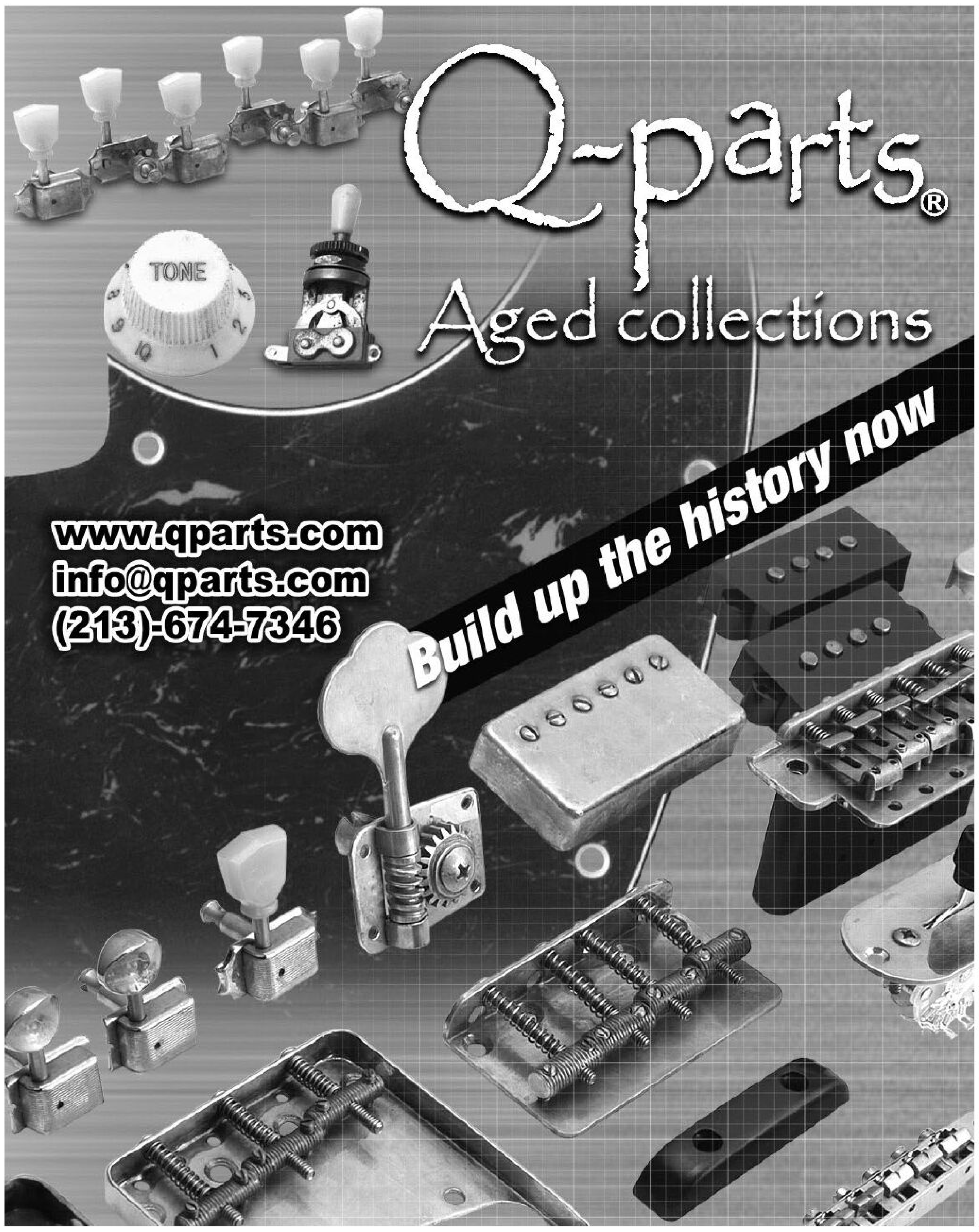
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01 Harold Wherry knows good eye (and ear) candy when he sees (and hears) it. Proof lies in the form of his '65 ES-335 and '56 GA-55V.

02 Clifford Lueck's collection focuses on "Decalomania" pieces from the 1930s, like this parlor guitar (left) with a white fretboard and decal from WACK Radio Sales & Service, Milwaukee, which also sold Larson Brothers instruments. Next to it is a Supertone tenor with rare laurel-wreath decal that honored athletes of the 1936 Berlin Olympics, followed by a Supertone with fan motif. The banjo-mandolin is a Regal with resonator back.

03 Chris Imber's amp gathering includes this '68 Princeton Reverb and '64-reissue Vibroverb (left), '75 Champ, '65 Super Reverb, '69 Vibrolux Reverb, EVM15L cab, an Alessandro-modded brownface Deluxe Reverb, and a Music Man HD-130.

04 Stan Johnson digs offset-cutaway Fenders like his Jazzmaster (left), Marauder, Jazzmaster with Gold Foil pickups, Jag-Stang, Meteora, Jaguar Squire, and Jaguar Special.

05 Paul Johnson's favorites are this '65/'66 Vox Berkeley Super Reverb Twin, an early-'60s Teisco (left), late-'70s Washburn Raven, a Tele copy, and a '90s MIM Tele.

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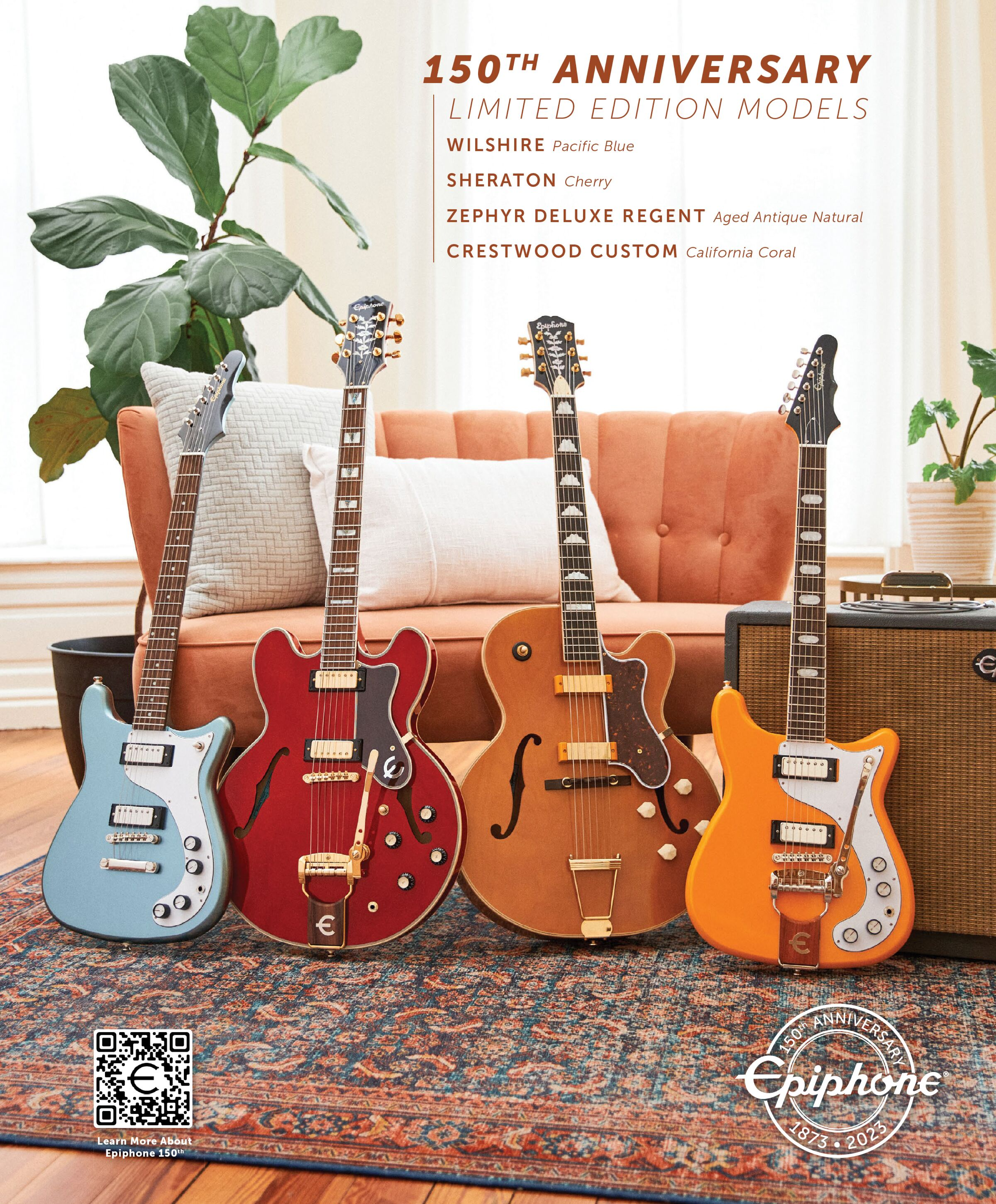
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